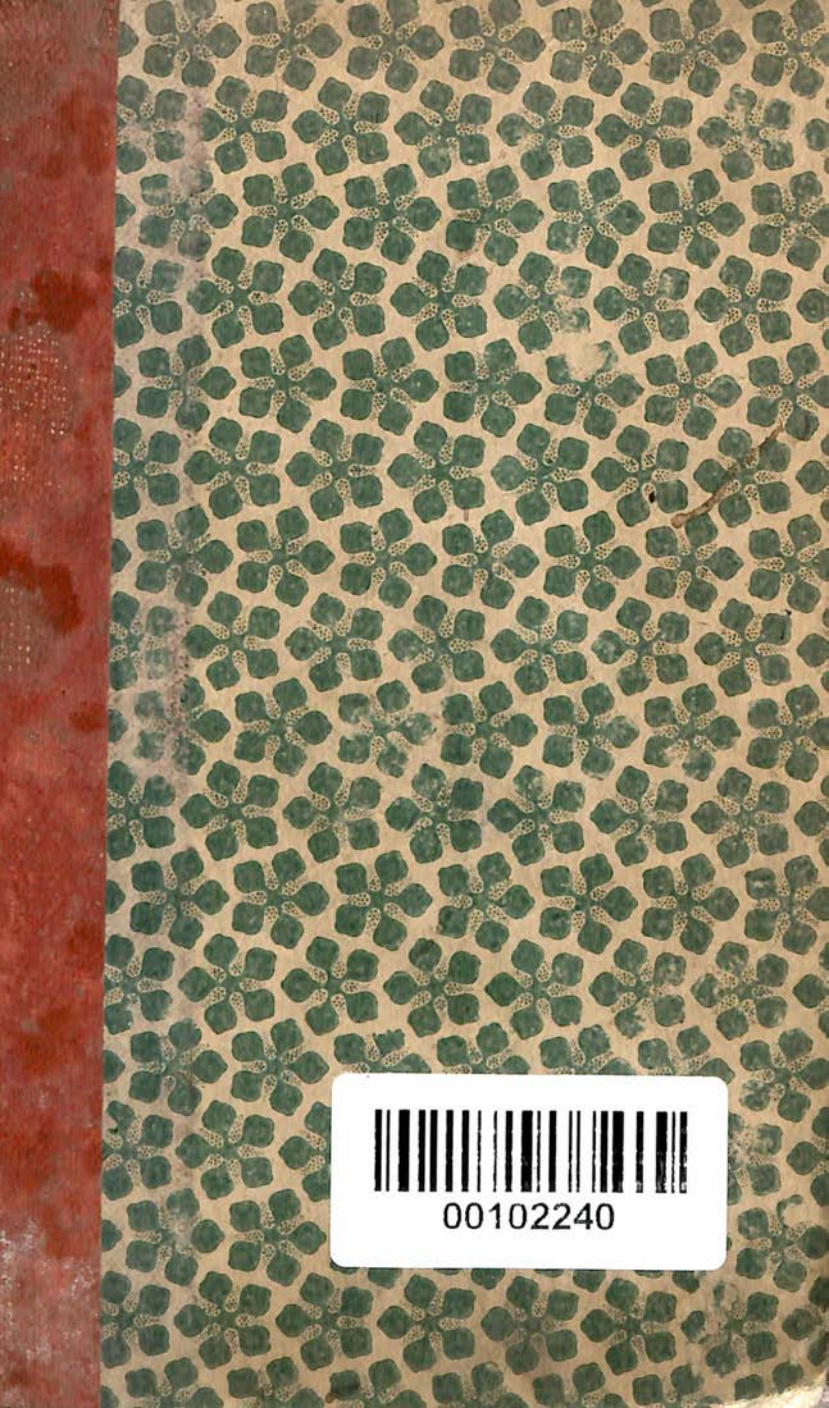
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PREFATORY NOTE.

THE translations in this volume are chiefly my own; but I have also taken expressions and sentences freely from others—and especially from Dr M'Crie, in his translation of the 'Provincial Letters'—when they seemed to convey well the sense of the original. It would be impossible to distinguish in all cases between what is my own and what I have borrowed. The 'Provincial Letters' have been translated at least four times into English. The translation of Dr M'Crie, published in 1846, is the most spirited. The 'Pensées' were translated by the Rev. Edward Craig, A.M. Oxon., in 1825, following the French edition of 1819, which again followed that of Bossut in 1779. A new translation, both of the 'Letters' and 'Pensées,' by George Pearce, Esq. —the latter after the restored text of M. Faugère— appeared in 1849 and 1850.

J. T.

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PASCAL.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE are few names which have become more classical in modern literature than that of Blaise Pascal. There is hardly any name more famous at once in literature, science, and religion. Cut off at the early age of thirty-nine—the fatal age of genius—he had long before attained pre-eminent distinction as a geometer and discoverer in physical science; while the rumour of his genius as the author of the 'Provincial Letters,' and as one of the chiefs of a notable school of religious thought, had spread far and wide. His writings continue to be studied for the perfection of their style and the vitality of their substance. As a writer, he belongs to no school, and is admired simply for his greatness by Encyclopedist and Romanticist, by Catholic and Protestant alike,—by men like Voltaire and Condorcet and Sainte-Beuve, no less than by men like Bossuet, Vinet, and Neander. His 'Pensées' have been carefully restored, and re-edited with minute and loving faithfulness in our time by editors of such opposite tastes and tendencies as M. Prosper Faugère, M. Havet, and M. Victor Rochet.

Cousin considered it one of the glories of his long intellectual career that he had first led the way to the remarkable restoration of Pascal's remains. Of all the illustrious names which group themselves around Port Royal, it is Pascal alone, and Racine—who was more its pupil, but less its representative—whose genius can be said to survive, and to invest it with an undying lustre.

Pascal's early death, the reserve of his friends under the assaults which the 'Provincial Letters' provoked, and his very fame as a writer, have served in some degree to obscure his personality. To many a modern reader he is little else than a great name. The man is hidden away behind the author of the 'Pensées,' or the defender of Port Royal. Some might even say that his writings are now more admired than studied. They have been so long the subject of eulogy that their classical character is taken for granted, and the reader of the present day is content to look at them from a respectful distance rather than spontaneously study them for himself. There may be some truth in this view. Pascal is certainly, like many other great writers, far more widely known than he is understood or appreciated. The old, which are still the common, editions of the 'Pensées,' have also given a certain commonplace to his reputation. It were certainly a worthy task to set him more clearly before our age both as a man and as a writer.

It is no easy task, however, to do this; and to tell the full story of Pascal's life is no longer possible. Its records, numerous as they are, are incomplete; all fail more or less at an interesting point of his career. They leave much unexplained; and the most familiar confidences of his sisters and niece, who have preserved

many interesting details regarding him, have not entirely removed the veil from certain aspects of his character. The well-known life by Madame Périer, his elder sister, is of course the chief authentic source of his biography. It was written shortly after his death, although not published for some time later; and nothing can be more lively, graphic, and yet dignified, than its portraiture of his youthful precocity, and, again, of the devotions and austerities of his later years. But it leaves many gaps unsupplied. Like other memoirs of the kind, it is written from a somewhat conventional point of view. No one, as M. Havet says, was nearer to him in all senses of the expression, or could have given a more true and complete account of all the incidents in his life; but she was not only his sister, but his enthusiastic friend and admirer, in whose eyes he was at once a genius and a saint — a man of God, called to a great mission. It was from a consciousness of this mission, and the full glory of his religious fame, that she looked back upon all his life; and the lines in which she draws it are coloured, in consequence, too gravely and monotonously. Certain particulars she drops out of sight altogether. These are to be found scattered here and there, sometimes in his own letters, more frequently in the letters of his younger sister, Jacqueline, and in a supplementary memoir, written by his niece, Marguerite Périer, all of which have been carefully published in our time, and made accessible to any reader.[1] The researches of M. Cousin, M. Faugère, and M. Havet, the

[1] Lettres, Opuscules, et Mémoires de Madame Périer et de Jacqueline, Sœurs de Pascal, et de Marguerite Périer, sa nièce; publiés sur les Manuscrits originaux, par M. P. Faugère. Paris, 1845.

curious and interesting monograph of M. Lélut,[1] have thrown light on various points; while the copious portraiture of Sainte-Beuve[2] has given to the whole an animation and a desultory charm which no English pen need strive to imitate.

My only hope, as my aim, will be in this little volume to set before the English reader perhaps a more full and connected account of the life and writings of Pascal than has yet appeared in our language, freely availing myself of all the sources I have indicated. And if long and loving familiarity with a subject—an intimacy often renewed both with the 'Provincial Letters' and the 'Pensées'—form any qualification for such a task, I may be allowed to possess it. It is now nearly thirty years since the study of Neander first drew me to the study of Pascal; and I ventured, with the confidence of youth, to draw from the 'Pensées,' which had then recently appeared in the new and admirable edition of M. Faugère, the outlines of a Christian Philosophy.[3] I shall venture on no such ambition within the bounds of this volume; but I trust I may be able to bring together the story of Pascal's life, controversy, and thought in such a manner as to lead others to the study of a writer truly great in the imperishable grandeur and elevation of his ideas, no less than in the exquisite finish and graces of his style.

[1] Jacqueline Pascal, par M. Victor Cousin. Troisième éd. 1856. Lélut, L'Amulette de Pascal. Paris, 1846.

[2] Sainte-Beuve. Port Royal. Tom. ii. iii. Mr Beard, in his two volumes on Port Royal, gives an excellent sketch of Blaise and Jacqueline Pascal, in which he has made a diligent use of all the recent French authorities on the subject.

[3] British Quarterly Review, August 1850.

CHAPTER I.

PASCAL'S FAMILY AND YOUTH.

BLAISE PASCAL was born at Clermont-Ferrand on the 19th June 1623. He belonged to an old Auvergne family, Louis XI. having ennobled one of its members for administrative services as early as 1478, although no use was made of the title, at least in the seventeenth century. The family cherished with more pride its ancient connection with the legal or 'Parliamentary' institutions of their country.[1] Pascal's grandfather, Martin Pascal, was treasurer of France; and his father, Étienne, after completing his legal studies in Paris, acquired the position of Second President of the Court of Aides at Clermont. In the year 1618 he married Antoinette Begon, who became the mother of four children, of whom three survived and

[1] The Provincial Parliaments in France before the Revolution discharged within a definite area the same judicial and administrative functions as the Parliament of Paris; but they were always regarded as offshoots of the latter, and subordinate to its supreme direction. They possessed no lawful political powers. Lalaune, Dictionnaire Historique, Art. "Parl.," p. 1421. The "Court of Aides," according to the same authority, p. 32, decided in the last resort civil and criminal processes relating to subsidies, assessments, and taxes in general, and superintended the collection of the royal revenues.

became distinguished. Madame Pascal died in 1626 or 1628;[1] and two years afterwards (in 1630) Étienne Pascal abandoned his professional duties, and came to Paris, in order that he might devote himself to the education of his children.

Soon after the Pascal family settled in Paris, their character and endowments seem to have attracted a widespread interest. If not superior to the Arnaulds, they were no less remarkable. They did not escape the penetrating eye of Richelieu, who, as he looked upon the father with his son, then fifteen years of age, and his two daughters, was so struck by their beauty that he exclaimed, without waiting for their formal introduction to him, that he *would like to make something great of them.*[2] Étienne Pascal was a man not only of official capacity, but of keen intellectual instincts and aspirations. He shared eagerly in the scientific enthusiasm of his time. A letter by him addressed to the Jesuit Noël shows that the vein of satire, half pleasant, half severe, which reached such perfection in the famous 'Letters' of his son, was not unknown to the father. The careful and systematic education which he gave to his son would alone have stamped him as a man of remarkable intelligence.

Gilberte, Pascal's elder sister and biographer, exerted an influence upon his character only second to that of his father. She married her cousin, M. Périer, also of a Parliamentary family, and Counsellor of the Court of Aides at Clermont. She was alike beautiful and accom-

[1] Gilberte Pascal—Madame Périer—says, in her life of her brother, 1626. Marguerite Périer, her daughter, Pascal's niece, says 1628. Cousin (B. Pascal), App. I. 315. Faugère, Lettres, Opuscules, &c., p. 419.

[2] Cousin, Jacqueline Pascal, p. 23.

plished, a student of mathematics, philosophy, and history.[1] For a time she shared in the enjoyments of the world, like other persons of her age and condition; but the same impulses of religious enthusiasm which animated the rest of her family led to her practical abandonment of the world while still young. The memoirs which she composed, both of her brother and sister, and her letters, all indicate a high intelligence and a mingled dignity, sweetness, and restraint of character, which made her their best counsellor and friend.

The younger sister, Jacqueline, has been made a special study by M. Cousin amongst the 'Illustrious Women of the Seventeenth Century.' She was beautiful as her sister, and a child of genius like her brother. She began to compose verses at the age of eight, and in her eleventh year assisted in the composition and the acting of a comedy in five acts, which was a subject of universal talk in Paris. Her powers, both as an actor and a verse-maker, made a wonderful reputation at the time, which, as we shall see, was highly serviceable to her after. Her verses, it must be confessed, are somewhat artificial and hollow; but her letters, and, more remarkable than either her verses or her letters, her 'Thoughts' on the 'Mystery of the Death of Christ,' are in some respects very fine, and might even claim a place beside some of those of her brother. They are equally elevated in tone, and pervaded by the same subtle, penetrating, radiant mysticism, the same rapture of self-sacrificing aspiration,

[1] Memoir by Marguerite Périer, her daughter, quoted by Cousin, ibid., p. 24. "Do not think," adds Cousin, "that this portrait is embellished: the austere Marguerite flatters no one; and if she, a Jansenist, says that her mother was beautiful, we may be sure that she was very much so."

though lacking the glow of inward fire and exquisite charm of style which marked the author of the 'Pensées.' Noble-minded and full of genius, she was yet without his depth and power of feeling, or his skill and finish as an author. In 1646 she came, along with her brother, and greatly through his influence, strongly under the power of religion; and in 1652, after her father's death, she renounced the world, and became one of the Sisters of Port Royal. She died amidst the persecution of the Sisters in 1661, a year before her brother.

In Paris the elder Pascal became a centre of men of congenial intellectual tastes with himself, and his house a sort of rendezvous for the mathematicians and the physicists of the time. Among them were Descartes, Gassendi, Mersenne, Roberval, Carcavi, and Le Pailleur; and from the frequent reunion of these men is said to have sprung the Academy of Sciences founded in 1666. It is interesting to notice that it was into this same society that Hobbes was introduced on his first and second visits to France, when he accompanied the future Duke of Devonshire there as tutor. With Father Mersenne and Gassendi especially he formed a warm friendship, which sheds an interest over his life. Possibly in some of these reunions the author of the 'Leviathan' may have encountered the young Pascal, and joined in the half admiration and half incredulity which his wonderful powers had begun to excite.

There never certainly was a more singular story of youthful precocity than that which Madame Périer has given of her brother, accustomed as we have become to such stories in the lives of eminent men. Detecting the remarkable powers of the boy, his father had formed

very definite resolutions as to his education. His chief maxim, Madame Périer says, was always "to keep the boy above his work." And for this reason he did not wish him to learn Latin till he was twelve years of age, when he might easily acquire it. In the meantime, he sought to give him a general idea of grammar—of its rules, and the exceptions to which these rules are liable—and so to fit him to take up the study of any language with intelligence and facility. He endeavoured further to direct his son's attention to the more marked phenomena of nature, and such explanations as he could give of them. But here the son's perception outstripped the father's power of explanation. He wished "to know the reason of everything;" and when his father's statements did not appear to him to give the reason, he was far from satisfied.

"For he had always an admirable perspicacity in discerning what was false; and it may be said that in everything and always truth was the sole object of his mind. From his childhood he could only yield to what seemed to him evidently true; and when others spoke of good reasons, he tried to find them for himself. He never quitted a subject until he had found some explanation which satisfied him."

Once, among other occasions, he was so interested in the fact that the sound emitted by a plate lying on a table when struck, suddenly ceased on the plate being touched by the hand, that he made an inquiry into sound in general, and drew so many conclusions that he embodied them in a "well-reasoned" treatise. At this time he was only twelve years of age.

At the same age he gave still more astonishing evidence of his precocious scientific capacities. His father,

perceiving his strong scientific bent, and desirous that he should first of all acquaint himself with languages before the absorption of the severer, but more engrossing, study seized him, had withdrawn from his sight all mathematical books, and carefully avoided the subject in the presence of his son when his friends were present. This, as might be expected, only quickened the curiosity of the boy, who frequently begged his father to teach him mathematics, and the father promised to do so as a reward when he knew Latin and Greek, which he was then learning. Piqued by this resistance, the boy asked one day, "What mathematical science was, and of what it treated?" He was told that its aim was to make figures correctly, and to find their right relations or proportions to one another. He began, says his sister, to meditate during his play-hours on the information thus communicated to him.

"And being alone in a room where he was accustomed to amuse himself, he took a piece of charcoal and drew figures upon the boards, trying, for example, to make a circle perfectly round, a triangle of which the sides and angles were equal, and similar figures. He succeeded in his task, and then endeavoured to determine the proportion of the figures, although so careful had his father been in hiding from him all knowledge of the kind, that he did not even know the names of the figures. He made names for himself, then definitions, then axioms, and finally demonstrations; and in this way had pushed his researches as far as the thirty-second proposition of the first book of Euclid."[1]

At this point a 'surprise' visit of his father arrested him in his task, although so absorbed was he in it, that

[1] "The exterior angle of a triangle is equal to the two interior and opposite angles; and the three interior angles are together equal to two right angles."

he did not at first recognise his father's presence. The older Pascal, having satisfied himself of the astonishing achievement which the youthful mathematician had worked out for himself in solitude, ran with tears of joy to communicate the fact to his friend M. le Pailleur. It was agreed betwixt them that such an aptitude for science should no longer be balked, and the lad was furnished with the means of pursuing his mathematical studies. Before he had completed his sixteenth year he had written the famous treatise on Conic Sections which excited the "mingled incredulity and astonishment" of Descartes.[1]

The happiness of Pascal's home was suddenly interrupted by an unforeseen calamity. On coming to Paris, his father had invested his savings in bonds upon the Hôtel de Ville. The Government, impoverished by wars and extravagance, reduced the value of these revenues, with the result of creating discontent and calling forth expostulation from the disappointed annuitants. Some of them met together, and, among others, Étienne Pascal, and gave such vent to their feelings as to alarm the Government. Richelieu took summary means of asserting his authority and silencing the disturbers. The meeting was denounced as seditious, and a warrant issued to arrest the offenders and throw them into the Bastille. Étienne Pascal, having become apprised of the hostile designs of the Cardinal, contrived to conceal himself at first in Paris, and afterwards took refuge in the solitude of his native district. His children were left without his care, and plunged in the greatest sorrow. At intervals, indeed, he contrived to see them in secret,

[1] Baillet, Vie de Descartes, liv. V. c. v. p. 39.

and is said even to have nursed Jacqueline through a severe attack of the smallpox, which impaired her hitherto remarkable beauty. But all the pleasant companionship which he had enjoyed as their instructor, and the centre of a group of intellectual friends, was at an end. He could only visit his home by stealth.

At this crisis (February 1639) Richelieu took a fancy to have Scudéry's tragi-comedy of "L'Amour Tyrannique" acted before him by young girls. The Court lady who undertook the management of the piece appealed to Jacqueline Pascal, whose accomplishments as a girl-actor were well known, to assist in its performance. She was then thirteen years of age. The elder sister, who, in the enforced absence of the father, was acting as the head of the family, replied, with feeling, that "they did not owe any favour to M. le Cardinal, who had not acted kindly towards them." The request, however, was pressed, in the hope that some good might come out of the affair to the family, and Jacqueline was allowed to appear. The result was all that could be anticipated. The Cardinal, charmed by the grace and accomplishment of her acting, received her cordially when she ventured to approach him with a petition on behalf of her father, thrown into a form of verses similar to many which she had already composed. The verses have been preserved with her other pieces, and have been thus rendered:[1]—

[1] "Ne vous étonnez pas, incomparable Armand,
Si j'ai mal contenté vos yeux et vos oreilles;
Mon esprit agité de frayeurs sans pareilles
Interdit à mon corps et voix et mouvement.
Mais pour me rendre ici capable de vous plaire,
Rappelez de l'exil mon misérable père."

"O marvel not, Armand, the great, the wise,
If I have failed to please thine ear, thine eyes;
My sorrowing spirit, torn by countless fears,
Each sound forbiddeth save the voice of tears.
With power to please thee wouldst thou me inspire?—
Recall from exile now my hapless sire."

She has herself described, in an interesting letter to her father,[1] the whole incident, and the result of her intercession. Having told how the Cardinal had been previously well prepared, and had the true state of the case explained in reference to her father, who appears to have been in no degree to blame in the agitation which called forth the displeasure of the Government, she says that—

"M. le Cardinal appeared to take great pleasure in the representation, especially when I spoke. He laughed very much, as did the whole company. When the comedy was finished, I descended from the theatre with the design of speaking to Madame d'Aiguillon [the same lady who had already interested herself in the business]. But as the Cardinal seemed about to leave, I approached him directly, and recited to him the verses I send you. He received them with extraordinary affection and caresses more than you can imagine; for at first, when I approached, he cried, 'Voilà la petite Pascal!' Then he embraced me and kissed me, and while I said my verses he continued to hold me in his arms, and kissed me each moment with great satisfaction. And then when I was done he said, 'Yes; I grant to you all that you ask; write to your father that he may return with safety.' Thereupon Madame d'Aiguillon approached, and addressed the Cardinal. 'It is truly well, sir, that you do something for this man. I have heard him spoken of as a thoroughly honest and learned man, and it is a pity he should remain unemployed. Then he has a son who is very learned in

[1] Cousin, Jacqueline Pascal, pp. 72-75.

mathematics, although as yet only fifteen years of age.' The Cardinal assured me once more that I might tell you to return in all safety; and as he seemed in such good humour, I asked him further that you might be allowed yourself to pay your thanks and respects to his Eminence. He said you would be welcome; and then, with other discourse, repeated, 'Tell your father, when he returns, to come and see me.' This he said three or four times. After this, as Madame d'Aiguillon was going away, my sister went forward to salute her. She received her with many caresses, and inquired for our brother, whom she said she wished to see. It was this that led to his introduction to the Duchess, who paid him many compliments on his scientific attainments. We were then conducted to a room, where we had a magnificent collation of dried sweetmeats, fruits, lemonade, and such things. Here the Duchess renewed her caresses in a manner you will hardly believe. In short, I cannot tell how much honour I received, for I am obliged to write as succinctly as possible. I am greatly obliged to M. de Moudroy for all the trouble he has taken, and I beg you will be so good as write to him by the first post to thank him, for he well deserves it. As for me, I esteem myself extremely happy to have in any way assisted in a result which must give you satisfaction."

This letter was written from Paris on the 4th April 1639, when Jacqueline Pascal was therefore only fourteen years of age. It is in all respects a remarkable and interesting production, both for the glimpse it gives of the great Cardinal in his hours of ease, and its revelation of Jacqueline's own character,—her dramatic cleverness, her firmness and wisdom in assailing the Cardinal with her prepared verses at the right moment, her self-conscious importance as the chief actor of such a scene, and all the same, her girlish enjoyment of the sweetmeats provided for her. It is a pleasant enough picture; and it deserves especially to be noticed how prominently the

scientific reputation of her brother, only two years older than herself, is already recognised.

The sequel was all that could have been desired. The father hastened, at the summons of his daughter, to pay his respects to Richelieu, who gave him a welcome reception. "I know all your merit," he said. "I restore you to your children, and commend them to you. I desire to do something considerable for you." Within two years Étienne Pascal was, in consequence, appointed Intendant of Rouen, where he settled with his family in 1641. Disturbances had arisen in Normandy at this time in connection with the payment of taxes, and the Government, believing that the Parliament at Rouen had not acted with sufficient vigour, took the matter into their own hands, and sent their officers to collect the revenues of the province.[1] Étienne Pascal's character and previous labours in this capacity, no less than his restoration to the Cardinal's favour, pointed him out as a man specially fitted for this work, which in the circumstances was not unattended with danger. The work in itself was also harassing and troublesome; and the youthful Pascal, anxious to assist his father, had busied himself in the invention of a machine for performing arithmetical calculations, which made a great sensation at the time. Ingenious as the machine was, it came to little, as we shall see in the next chapter, which will be devoted to a brief account of Pascal's scientific discoveries. In the meantime it will be better to confine ourselves to the thread of his personal history up to the important epoch which is known as his first conversion.

[1] The Intendant was a special Royal Commissioner, sent into the provinces to watch over the administration of justice and the finances.

Settled at Rouen, he pursued his studies with unremitting devotion, and with only too little regard for his health. His elder sister, who might have won him occasionally to lighter pursuits, was married to her cousin M. Périer in 1641, and two years afterwards went with him to Clermont, where her husband was appointed a Counsellor in the Court of Aides. Jacqueline was absorbed in her own poetical studies, which received a special impetus from the friendship of Corneille, who had returned at this time to his native town. The illustrious dramatist speedily sought out the Pascal family, and became one of their most intimate associates. A prize being given every year for the best copy of verses on the "Conception of the Virgin," it was awarded to certain verses of Jacqueline's for the year 1640. When the announcement of the result was made she was absent, but a friend of the family rose and returned thanks in verse in the name of the youthful poetess—*Pour une jeune muse absente.* The friend was Corneille, whose impromptu lines on the occasion, along with those of Jacqueline, are still preserved.[1] Neither have much poetic merit, but they recall an interesting incident.

A bright atmosphere of intellectual emulation and cheerful prospects surrounds the family at this time. But all the while it is evident, from Madame Périer's account, that her brother was injuring his health greatly in his undue assiduity in his scientific pursuits. The attempts to perfect the construction of his arithmetical machine seem especially to have worn out his delicate frame, and to have laid the foundation of the nervous

[1] See Cousin, Jacqueline Pascal, pp. 78-80.

prostration from which he more or less suffered all his life afterwards. "From the age of eighteen," she says in a significant passage that her brother "hardly ever passed a day without pain. In the intermissions of his sufferings, however, his spirit was such that he was constantly bent on some new discovery."[1]

In the beginning of 1646 an accident happened which had important consequences both to Pascal and his sisters. Étienne Pascal fell upon the ice and severely sprained his foot. During his confinement he was attended by two brothers who had acquired repute in the treatment of such injuries. They were gentlemen of family in the neighbourhood, who had devoted themselves to medicine and anatomy from benevolent instincts and the love of these studies. Both were disciples of a clergyman at Rouville, who was an enthusiastic pietist and friend of St Cyran. Crowds flocked to hear Pastor Guillebert whenever he preached, and many were stirred by his eloquence to devote themselves to pious and philanthropical labours. One of the brothers under this inspiring guidance built a hospital at the end of his park, and gave his children to the service of the Church in various capacities. The other brother, who had no children, provided beds in the hospital and attended the sick poor.

[1] M. Lélut's volume (already referred to) deserves special attention in its bearing on Pascal's health, and the character of his sufferings. He lays great stress on Pascal's highly-strung nervous constitution, in connection both with the precocity of his genius, his physical sufferings, his religious susceptibility, and the profound melancholy which affected his later years. The study is very interesting in some respects, but is overstrained in its physiological details and imaginary analysis.

The character and conversation of these men made a deep impression upon the Pascal family. Hitherto esteemed pious, they had not yet made religion an anxious concern in their lives. Madame Périer says expressly of her brother that he had been "preserved by the special protection of God from all youthful vices, and, what was still more remarkable in the case of a mind of such strength and pride, he had never yielded to any libertinism of thought, but had always limited his curiosity to natural inquiries." He attributed, according to her statement, this religious sobriety of mind to the instructions and example of his father, who had a great respect for religion, and who had impressed upon him from his infancy the maxim, "that whatever is the object of faith cannot be the object of reason, and still less the subject of it." He had seen, in his father, the combination of scientific attainment with a strong reasoning power, and the maxim therefore fell with weight from his lips. And so, when he listened to the discourses of free-thinkers, young as he was—

"He remained unmoved by them, and simply looked upon them as men who had adopted the false principle that the human reason is above everything, and who know nothing of the real nature of faith; so that this spirit, so great and inquisitive, which searched so carefully for the reason of everything, was at the same time submissive as a child to all the truths of religion, and this submissive simplicity predominated in him through his whole life."[1]

This is a significant extract in more ways than one. In the meantime we quote it as indicating the religious atmosphere of Pascal's home, and the pious temper

[1] Madame Périer, Vie de Pascal.

which marked him from the first. But as yet religion had not taken hold of him with an absorbing enthusiasm. It had its place in his thoughts, and this a deeply respectful place; but now, about his twenty-third year, in communication with the two friends we have mentioned, and under the same influence which had moved them so deeply, it began to lay hold of him more powerfully. He and his father and sisters read eagerly the books of St Cyran, and of Jansen, the Bishop of Ypres, whose name became so conspicuous in connection with Port Royal. A discourse by the latter on "The Reformation of the Inward Man," and also Arnauld's "Manual on Frequent Communion," are supposed to have specially impressed him. In the language of his sister—

"Providence led him to the study of such pious writings while he was not yet twenty-four years of age; and God so enlightened him by this course of reading, that he came to realise that the Christian religion obliges us to live only for God, and to have no other object besides Him. So clear and necessary appeared this truth to him, that he gave up for a time all his researches, renounced all other knowledge, and applied himself alone to the 'one thing needful' spoken of by our Lord."

This event is spoken of by Pascal's biographers as his "first conversion," and it appears to have been attended not only with a zealous consecration of his own powers to the service of religion, but moreover, as often happens in the case of youthful enthusiasm, with a warm determination against all who seemed to him to be acting at variance with the true faith. "Although," as his sister says, "he had made no special study of scholastic

theology, he was not ignorant of the judgments of the Church against the heresies invented by human subtlety. All indications of heretical opinion excited his indignation, and God gave him at this time an opportunity of testifying his zeal on behalf of religion." She then adds in illustration the following story:—

"There was at Rouen at this time a man who taught a new philosophy which attracted the curious. My brother, pressed by two of his young friends, accompanied them to hear this man; but they were greatly surprised when they found, in conversation with him, that he drew consequences from his philosophy at variance with the decisions of the Church. He sought to prove by his arguments that the body of Jesus Christ was not formed of the blood of the Holy Virgin, but of some other matter specially created, and several other like subjects. They pointed out to him his error, but he remained firm in his opinions. Thereupon, taking into consideration how dangerous it was to leave the instruction of youth in the hands of a man with such erroneous opinions, they resolved, after previously informing him of their intention, to denounce him if he continued in his errors. So it happened; for he despised their advice, and in such a manner, as to leave them no alternative but to denounce him to M. du Bellay,[1] who was then discharging episcopal functions in the diocese of Rouen for the Archbishop. M. du Bellay sent for the man, and having interrogated him, was deceived by an equivocal confession of faith which he wrote and subscribed. Otherwise he made little account of the affair as reported by the three young men. However, when they saw the confession of faith, they at once recognised its defects, and entered into communication with the Archbishop himself, who, having examined into the matter, saw its gravity,

[1] A disciple and friend of François de Sales, who had been bishop of Bellay or Belley, but had at this time demitted his bishopric for the Abbey of Aulney-Havet.

and sent in writing a special order to M. du Bellay to make the man retract all the points of which he was accused, and to receive nothing from him except by communication of his accusers. The order was carried out, and the result was that he appeared in the council of the Archbishop and renounced all his errors—it may be said sincerely, for he never showed any anger towards those who had engaged in the affair, so as to lead one to suppose that he had been himself deceived by the false conclusions which he had drawn from false principles. It was made plain that his accusers had no design of injuring him, but only of undeceiving him, and so preventing him from seducing the young, who were incapable of distinguishing the true from the false in such subtle questions."

This story reflects somewhat doubtfully on Pascal's fairness and good sense, even as told by Madame Périer. But it has not been left in the vagueness in which it stands in her narrative. M. Cousin published for the first time full details regarding it in the volume by which he may be said to have initiated the new researches into the life and writings of Pascal. These details, which fill more than forty pages of appendix to M. Cousin's volume,[1] are no longer of any interest in themselves; but they enable us to understand more clearly the conduct of Pascal and his two friends. Unhappily they deepen rather than lighten the shade which the story throws upon Pascal's intemperate zeal. The name of the accused teacher was Jacques Forton, a Capucin monk, known as the Père St Ange. He taught no

[1] The documents containing these details are found among the Pascal MSS. in the National Library at Paris, having been given by Marguerite Périer to one of the Guerrier family, by whose care so many interesting memorials of Pascal have been preserved. See Faugère, Int. to Ed. of Pensées, xlvi.-ix.

new philosophy; but he had communicated to Pascal or his friends, in private conversation specially desired by them, certain theological opinions which he had espoused. These, as given in the statement of the case signed by Pascal and his two friends, mainly concern such abstruse subjects as the relation of reason and faith, and the possibility of demonstrating the doctrine of the Trinity as the source of all other knowledge. The curious question as to the constitution of the body of Jesus occupies only a subordinate place. The monk, as shown in the whole proceedings, was evidently more of a speculative dreamer than a heretic—a man fond of disputation about matters beyond his comprehension. It is mentioned by the three youthful zealots, in the *récit* bearing their signature, that as they were about to part with him, "after the accustomed civilities," he was careful to let them know that he advanced the points in dispute, not as dogmas, but merely as propositions or thoughts for discussion, the fruit of his own reasonings.

There is no reason to doubt that Pascal's conduct on this occasion arose entirely from honest zeal. He thought religion compromised by the strange reasonings which he had heard. There is as little doubt, however, that his zeal outran his discretion. He showed a determination to pursue the matter amounting to persecution. The worthy priest had evidently no intention of promulgating heresy; for he is glad, when called upon, of an opportunity of proving his orthodoxy. With this view he produced, side by side with the articles of accusation, passages from a former volume of his which had been printed with official sanction. Pascal still demurred,

even with this evidence before him. A second declaration was obtained from the priest, and the bishop refused to go further. The sympathies of the community were evidently against the youthful zealots; and finally Pascal's father, convinced that enough had been done to vindicate the truth, successfully interposed as mediator.[1]

Pascal's health about this period appears to have undergone a change for the worse. He suffered from excessive headache and great internal heat and pain. A singular characteristic of his malady was his inability to swallow water unless it was heated, and even then only drop by drop. He was the subject, also, of a remarkable paralytic seizure thus described by his niece:—

"He fell," she says, "into a very extraordinary state, as the result of his great application to his scientific studies; for the senses (*les esprits*) having mounted strongly to the brain, he became in a manner paralysed from the waist downwards. His legs and feet grew cold as marble; and they were obliged every day to put on socks soaked in brandy in order to try and restore heat in his feet. At the same time the physician interdicted him from all study."[2]

M. Lélut[3] explains at length this attack of Pascal's as a well-known form of dynamical paralysis, of a similar nature with hypochondria and hysteria, proceeding from a disordered state of the nervous affections, the result

[1] Cousin, app. 392.

[2] Faugère, Lettres, Opuscules, &c., p. 452. It is difficult to make out the exact chronological sequence of some of the facts mentioned by Pascal's sister and niece. But a special accession of ill-health, according to both, seems to have followed his conversion at Rouen, and to have been amongst the causes of his removal to Paris in 1647.

[3] Pp. 134-137.

of overwork acting upon a delicate organisation. The result is temporary, as distinguished from the paralysis arising from organic lesion, but indicates a highly susceptible constitution, the ready prey of melancholy and imaginative exaggeration, to which, in M. Lélut's opinion, Pascal was more or less liable during the remaining years of his life.

CHAPTER II.

PASCAL'S SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERIES.

PASCAL'S scientific studies may be said to have begun with the remarkable incident of his youth already related, when he elaborated for himself, in a solitary chamber without books, thirty-two propositions of the first book of Euclid. On the other hand, these studies may be said to have extended to his closing years, when (in 1658 and 1659) he reverted to the abstruser mathematics, and made the *cycloid* a subject of special thought. But his scientific labours were in the main concentrated in the eight or ten years of his life which followed the removal of the family to Rouen. It will be convenient, therefore, to notice these labours and discoveries in a single chapter here, which will, at the same time, carry on the main history of his life during these years. All that can be expected from the present writer is a slight sketch of this part of the subject, which indeed is all that would be interesting to the general reader.

At the age of sixteen Pascal had already acquired a scientific reputation. He is spoken of by the Duchess d'Aiguillon, in the interview with Richelieu in which she pleaded the cause of the exiled father, as "very

learned in mathematics;" and when his sister presented him after the dramatic representation on that occasion, the Duchess gave him "great commendation for his scientific attainments."[1] When allowed by his father to pursue the natural bent of his genius, he made extraordinary progress. He was still only twelve years of age, but Euclid's Elements, as soon as put into his hands, were mastered by him without any explanation. By-and-by he began to take an active part in the scientific discussions which took place at his father's house; and his achievement in Conic Sections has been already narrated.

Descartes's incredulity was not without reason; but there is no room to doubt the fact. The little treatise, 'Pour les Coniques,' still survives. It bears the date of 1640, and occupies only six pages.[2] After a very clear statement of his subject, the writer modestly concludes:—

"We have several other problems and theorems, and several consequences deducible from the preceding; but the mistrust which I have of my slight experience and capacity does not permit me to advance more till my present effort has passed the examination of able men who may oblige me by looking at it. Afterwards, if they think it has sufficient merit to be continued, we shall endeavour to push our studies as far as God will give the power to conduct them."

It is interesting to notice the beginning of relations betwixt Descartes and Pascal, considering the jealousy that afterwards arose betwixt them. There is something of this feeling from the first in the older philosopher,

[1] Jacqueline Pascal, p. 73.

[2] Œuvres de Blaise Pascal, t. 4. Paris, 1819.

who was now in the forty-fourth year of his age, and in the full zenith of his great reputation. He appears to have been greatly fascinated by Pascal's peculiar powers; but the men were of too marked individuality of character, and too divergent in intellectual sympathy and personal aspiration, to appreciate each other fully.

Pascal's next achievement was the invention of an arithmetical machine, chiefly prompted by a desire to assist his father in his official duties at Rouen. He has given us no description of this machine from his own pen. In the "Avis" addressed to all whose curiosity was excited by it, he excuses himself from this task by the natural remark that such a description would be useless without entering into a number of technical details unintelligible to the general reader; and that an actual inspection of it, combined with a brief *vivâ voce* explanation, would be far more satisfactory than any lengthened account in writing. There is an elaborate description, however, of the machine, by Diderot, in the first volume of the 'Encyclopédie,' which is reprinted in the collection of Pascal's scientific works. Pascal's main difficulties occurred, not in connection with the invention itself, which he seems to have very soon perfected according to his own conception, but with the construction of the instrument after he had mentally worked it out in all its details. These difficulties proved so great, and so many imperfect specimens of the instrument were made, that, in order to secure both his reputation and his interest, he acquired in 1649 a special "privilége du Roi," which confined the manufacture of the machine to himself, and such workmen as he should employ and sanction. All others, "of whatever quality and condi-

tion," were prohibited from "making it, or causing it to be made, or selling it." But neither these precautions nor the merits of the invention itself, which were admitted by all competent judges, were of avail to make the instrument a practical success. Many men of mathematical and mechanical genius in different countries have applied themselves to the same task. The celebrated Leibnitz is said to have constructed a machine excelling Pascal's in ingenuity and power. In our own time, Mr Babbage's wonderful achievement in the same direction attracted wide attention, and has been lavishly eulogised by Sir David Brewster and others:—

"While all previous contrivances," says Sir David,[1] "performed only particular arithmetical operations, under a sort of copartnery between the man and the machine, the extraordinary invention of Mr Babbage actually substitutes mechanism in the place of man. A problem is given to the machine, and it solves it by computing a long series of numbers following some given law. In this manner it calculates astronomical, logarithmic, and navigation tables, as well as tables of the powers and products of numbers. It can integrate, too, innumerable equations of finite differences; and, in addition to these functions, it does its work cheaply and quickly; *it corrects whatever errors are accidentally committed, and it prints all its calculations.*"

Notwithstanding this brilliant picture, the great expense and the complications involved in the construction of such an instrument have seriously interfered with its success. It is said that Mr Babbage's machine, much more his marvellous analytic engine, have never yet been properly constructed.[2]

[1] North British Review, August 1844, p. 296.

[2] I owe this information to the kindness of my friend, Professor

Pascal fortunately turned his thoughts into a new and more fruitful channel. We have now to contemplate him as one of an illustrious band associated in a great discovery in physical science. Before his time considerable progress had been made towards a knowledge of atmospheric pressure. Galileo and his pupil Torricelli had both been busy with the subject. To Pascal, however, remains the glory of carrying successfully to a conclusion the suggestion of Torricelli, and of verifying the results which he had indicated. Here, as in almost all such discoveries, it is found that different minds have been actively pursuing the same or similar lines of thought and observation, and controversy has arisen as to the exact merits of each; but Pascal has himself so candidly explained[1] how far he was indebted to his great Italian predecessors, and how far he made original experiments of his own, that both his relation to them and his own work stand clearly apparent.

It had been found by the engineers engaged in the construction of fountains for Cosmo dei Medici in Florence that they could not raise water in an ordinary pump more than thirty-two feet above the reservoir. The water, having reached this height, would rise no higher. Galileo was appealed to for a solution of the difficulty.[2] Imbued with the ancient notion that Nature abhors a

Tait of Edinburgh. He further informs me that "of late years the calculating machine of M. Scheutz has been employed in the production of many valuable tables almost hopelessly beyond the power of mere mental calculation;" and that a very simple and ingenious machine, known as the Arithmomètre of M. Thomas, is to be found in the office of almost every engineer and actuary.

[1] Letter to M. Ribeyre, Œuvres, t. iv.

[2] The illustrious Italian was then advanced in years. He died in January 1642.

vacuum, and that this was, as then prevalently believed, the explanation of the water following the elevation of the piston in the pump, the philosopher replied in effect that there were limits to the action of this principle, and that Nature's abhorrence of a vacuum did not extend beyond thirty-two feet. He was himself, it need hardly be said, dissatisfied with such a reply, and accordingly he invited his pupil, Torricelli, to investigate the subject. The latter very soon found that the weight of the water was concerned in the result. He made experiments with a heavier fluid—mercury—and ascertained that a column of mercury enclosed in a tube three feet in length hermetically sealed at the lower end, and closed with the finger at the top, on being inserted in a basin of the same liquid and the finger withdrawn, stood at a height of about 28 inches in the basin. As the specific gravities of water and mercury were in the ratio of 32 feet and 28 inches, he was led to the conclusion that the water in the pump and the mercury in the tube at these respective heights exerted the same pressure on the same base, and that both were of course counterbalanced by a determinate force. But what was this force? He had learned from Galileo that the air was a heavy fluid, and he was carried, therefore, directly to the further conclusion that the weight of the atmosphere was the counteracting cause in both cases; in the one, pressing upon the reservoir from which the water was drawn—and in the other, on the surrounding mercury in the basin. He published his experiments and researches in 1645, but dying soon afterwards, his conclusions remained unverified.

The fame of Torricelli's experiments had reached Paris as early as 1644, before their formal publication. Some one, Pascal says, had communicated them to Father

Mersenne—both a religious and scientific intimate, as we have already seen, of the Pascal family. Mersenne had tried the experiments for himself, at first without success, but soon with better fortune, after he had been to Rome and had learned more fully about them. "The news of these having reached Rouen in 1646, where I then was," says Pascal,[1] "I made the Italian experiment, founding on Mersenne's account, with great success. I repeated it several times, and in this manner satisfying myself of its accuracy, I drew certain conclusions from it, for the proof of which I made new and very different experiments in presence of four or five hundred people of all sorts, and amongst others, five or six Jesuit fathers of the College of Rouen." When his experiments became known in Paris, he adds, they were confounded with those which had been made in Italy, and the result was that some attributed to him a credit which was not his due, while others, "by a contrary injustice," were disposed to take away the credit of what he had really done.

It was with the view of placing the matter in a clear light, and vindicating his own share in the train of experiments which had been made, that he published in 1647 his "Nouvelles Expériences touchant le Vide," the first of his hydrostatical treatises. He was at pains to explain the distinction betwixt his own experiments and those which had been made in Italy; and not content with this, he added in express words, in an "avis au lecteur," that he "was not the inventor of the original experiment, but that it had been made in Italy four years before." So little, indeed, did Pascal borrow directly from Torricelli, or seek to appropriate the fruits of his researches, that he was as yet ignorant of the ex-

[1] Œuvres, t. iv. pp. 160, 161.

planation which the Italian had suggested of the phenomenon so fully established. He saw, of course, that the old maxim of Nature abhorring a vacuum had no solid foundation; but he tried to account for the vacuum above the water and the mercury by such a supposition as the following:—

"That it contained no portion of either of these fluids, or of any matter appreciable by the senses; that all bodies have a repugnance to separate from a state of continuity, and admit a vacuum between them; that this repugnance is not greater for a large vacuum than a small one; that its measure is a column of water about 32 feet in height, and that beyond this limit a great or small vacuum is formed above the water with the same facility, provided that no foreign obstacle interfere to prevent it."

Pascal's treatise, while still retaining so much of the old traditional physics, was made an object of lively attack by the Jesuit Rector of the College of Paris, Stephen Noël. Pascal replied to him at first directly; and then in answer to a second attack—and so far also in answer to a treatise by the Jesuit, entitled "Le Plein du Vide," published in 1648—he made a more elaborate statement in a letter addressed to M. le Pailleur, and in a further letter addressed to Father Noël in the same year. There can hardly be any doubt that this was the commencement of Pascal's hostile relations with the Jesuits. On their part, they failed not to remember in after years, and in a more serious struggle, that he was an old enemy; whilst he on his part probably drew something of the contemptuous scorn which he poured upon them from the recollection of their obstinate ignorance in matters of science.

Meanwhile, in defending himself from the attacks of

ignorance, Pascal did not fail to open his own mind to fuller scientific light. As soon as the explanation of Torricelli was communicated to him, he accepted it without hesitation, and resolved to carry out a further series of experiments with the view of verifying this explanation, and of banishing for ever the scholastic nonsense of Nature's abhorrence of a vacuum. If the weight of the air was really the cause which sustained the height of the mercury in the Torricellian tube, he saw at once that this height would vary at different elevations, according to the varying degree of atmospheric pressure at these elevations. He proceeded accordingly to test the result; but the higher levels around Rouen were too insignificant to enable him to draw any decisive inference. Accordingly, he communicated with his brother-in-law in Auvergne with the view of having an adequate experiment made during an ascent of the Puy de Dôme, which rises in the neighbourhood of Clermont to a height of about 3000 feet. The state of his own health prevented him from conducting the experiment personally, and M. Périer was detained by professional avocations from undertaking it immediately. But at length, in September 1648, the experiment was carried out successfully, and the results communicated to Pascal. I cannot do better than quote the account of this important event as rendered by an eminent scientific authority,[1] from M. Périer's own recital of the facts in his letter to Pascal:—

"On the morning of Saturday, the 19th September, the day fixed for the interesting observation, the weather was unsettled; but about five o'clock the summit of the Puy

[1] Sir D. Brewster, in an article on Pascal's Writings and Discoveries in North Brit. Rev., Aug. 1844. Sir David's account is almost

de Dôme began to appear through the clouds, and Périer resolved to proceed with the experiment. The leading characters in Clermont, whether ecclesiastics or laymen, had taken a deep interest in the subject, and had requested Périer to give them notice of his plans. He accordingly summoned his friends, and at eight in the morning there assembled in the garden of the Pères Minimes, about a league below the town, M. Bannier, of the Pères Minimes; M. Mosnier, canon of the cathedral church; along with MM. la Ville and Begon, counsellors of the Court of Aides, and M. la Porte, doctor and professor of medicine in Clermont. These five individuals were not only distinguished in their respective professions, but also by their scientific acquirements; and M. Périer expresses his delight at having been on this occasion associated with them. M. Périer began the experiment by pouring into a vessel 16 lb. of quicksilver, which he had rectified during the three preceding days. He then took two glass tubes, four feet long, of the same bore, and hermetically sealed at one end and open at the other; and making the ordinary experiment of a vacuum with both, he found that the mercury stood in each of them at the same level and at the height of 26 inches 3½ lines. This experiment was repeated twice, with the same result. One of these glass tubes, with the mercury standing in it, was left under the care of M. Chastin, one of the Religious of the House, who undertook to observe and mark any changes in it that might take place during the day; and the party already named set out with the other tube for the summit of the Puy de Dôme, about 500 toises (a toise is about six feet in length) above their first station. Before arriving there, they found that the mercury stood at the height of 23 inches and 2 lines—no less than 3 inches and 1½ line lower than it stood at the Minimes. The party were 'struck with admiration and astonishment

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literally translated from M. Périer's letter to Pascal, of date September 22, 1648, and embodied in Pascal's "Récit de la grande Expérience de l'Équilibre des Liqueurs," first published in 1648.

at this result;' and 'so great was their surprise that they resolved to repeat the experiment under various forms.' The glass tube, or the barometer, as we may call it, was placed in various positions on the summit of 'the mountain' —sometimes in the small chapel which is there; sometimes in an exposed and sometimes in a sheltered position; sometimes when the wind blew, and sometimes when it was calm; sometimes in rain, and sometimes in a fog: and under all these various influences, which fortunately took place during the same day, the quicksilver stood at the same height of 23 inches 2 lines. During their descent of the mountain they repeated the experiment at *Lafon-de-l'Arbre*, an intermediate station, nearer the Minimes than the summit of the Puy, 'and they found the mercury to stand at the height of 25 inches—a result with which the party was greatly pleased,' as indicating the relation between the height of the mercury and the height of the station. Upon reaching the Minimes, they found that the mercury had not changed its height, notwithstanding the inconstancy of the weather, which had been alternately clear, windy, rainy, and foggy. M. Périer repeated the experiments with both the glass tubes, and found the height of the mercury to be still 26 inches $3\frac{1}{2}$ lines. On the following morning M. de la Marc, priest of the Oratory, to whom M. Périer had mentioned the preceding results, proposed to have the experiment repeated at the top and bottom of the towers of Nôtre Dame in Clermont. He accordingly yielded to his request, and found the difference to be 2 lines. Upon comparing these observations, M. Périer obtained the following results, showing the changes in the altitude of the mercurial column corresponding to certain differences of altitude of position:—

Difference of altitude. Toises.	Changes in the height of the mercury. Lines.
500	$37\frac{1}{2}$
150	$15\frac{1}{2}$
27	$2\frac{1}{2}'$
7	$\frac{1}{2}$

When Pascal received these results, all the difficulties were removed; and perceiving from the two last observations in the preceding table that 20 toises, or about 120 feet, produce a change of 2 lines, and 7 toises, or 42 feet, a change of ½ a line, he made the observation at the top and bottom of the tower of St Jacques de la Boucherie, which was about 24 or 25 toises, or about 150 feet high, and he found a difference of more than 2 lines in the mercurial column; and in a private house 90 steps high he found a difference of ½ a line. . . . After this important experiment was made, Pascal intimated to M. Périer that different states of the weather would occasion differences in the barometer, according as it was cold, hot, dry, or moist; and in order to put this opinion to the test of experiment, M. Périer instituted a series of observations, which he continued from the beginning of 1649 till March 1651. Corresponding observations were made at the same time at Paris and at Stockholm by the French ambassador, M. Chanut, and Descartes; and from these it appeared that the mercury rises in weather which is cold, cloudy, and damp, and falls when the weather is hot and dry, and during rain and snow, but still with such irregularities that no general rule could be established. At Clermont the difference between the highest and the lowest state of the mercury was 1 inch 3½ lines; at Paris the same; and at Stockholm 2 inches 2½ lines."

From the account here presented of these researches, there is no difficulty in determining the exact credit due to Pascal on the one hand, and his Italian predecessors on the other. He completed what they had begun, and verified what they had indicated. As the Abbé Bossut has expressed it, Galileo proved that air was a heavy fluid; Torricelli conceived that its weight was the cause of the suspension of the water in a pump and the mercury in a tube. Pascal demonstrated that this was the fact. No one was more anxious than Pascal himself

that Torricelli should be acknowledged as the real discoverer of the principle which it was left to him to establish by the test of experiment. He claimed, however, his own definite share in the discovery, both as having carried on a series of independent experiments, and as having converted what he himself calls the "conjecture" of Torricelli into an established fact. It was painful to him, therefore, to have this share denied, and even open accusations made against him that he had appropriated, without acknowledgment, the results of Torricelli's researches. This accusation was made in certain theses of philosophy maintained in the Jesuit College of Montferrand in 1651, and dedicated to Pascal's own friend, M. de Ribeyre, first president at the Court of Aides at Clermont. Pascal's name was not indeed mentioned in these theses; but there could be no doubt of the allusion made to "certain persons loving novelty" who claimed to be the inventors of a definite experiment of which Torricelli was the real author. It was this accusation which drew from Pascal his letter to M. Ribeyre, bearing the date of 12th July of the same year, in which he has described, with admirable lucidity and temper, his relations to the whole subject. In this letter he distinctly says that the Italian experiments were known in France from the year 1644; that they were repeated in France by several persons in several places during 1646; that he himself had made, as we have already seen, definite experiments in 1647, and published the results in the same year; and that he had then not mentioned the name of Torricelli, because, while he knew that the experiments were made in Italy four years before, he did not then know that the experimenter was Torricelli; but

that so soon as he learned this fact—which he and his friends were so eager to know, that they sent a special letter of inquiry to Rome—he was "ravished with the idea that the experimenter was so illustrious a genius, whose mathematical writings, already well known, surpassed those of all antiquity." He says, in conclusion, that it was only in the same year (1647), after the publication of his own researches, that he learned "the very fine thought" of Torricelli concerning the cause of all the effects which had been attributed to the horror of a vacuum. But "as this was only a conjecture as yet unverified," he then, with the view of ascertaining the truth or falsehood of it, conceived the plan of the experiments carried out by M. Périer at the top and the foot of the Puy de Dôme. "It is true, sir," he adds, "and I say it boldly, that this series of experiments was my own invention; and therefore I may say that the new knowledge thus acquired is entirely due to me."

To this letter M. Ribeyre made a satisfactory and touching reply. He expresses disapproval of the allusion of the Jesuit father, but as the discourse was otherwise free from offence, he was willing to attribute it to a "pardonable emulation among *savants*," rather than to any intention of assailing Pascal. He makes, in short, the best excuse he can for the Jesuit, and hastens to assure Pascal that his reputation needed no justification:—

"Your candour and your sincerity are too well known to admit any belief that you could do anything inconsistent with the virtuous profession apparent in all your actions and manner. I honour and revere your virtue more than your science; and as in both the one and the other you equal the

most famous of the age, do not think it strange if, adding to the common esteem which all have of you, a friendship contracted many years ago with your father, I subscribe myself yours," &c.

But Pascal had to sustain suspicion and attack in a quarter more formidable than that of the Jesuit fathers at Montferrand. We have already spoken of the rather unhappy commencement of relations between him and Descartes. Farther on we get a more pleasant glimpse of these relations, in a letter from Jacqueline Pascal to Madame Périer, dated 25th September 1647, and apparently shortly after Pascal had retired to Paris, along with his younger sister, leaving their father for some time still at Rouen. This letter is so interesting, both in its bearing on the question which arose between Descartes and Pascal, and in itself, as giving the only account we have of personal intercourse between these two illustrious men, that we present it almost entire :—

"I have delayed writing to you," Jacqueline says, addressing her sister,[1] "because I wished to tell to you at length of the interview of M. Descartes and my brother, and I had no leisure yesterday to say that on the evening of Sunday last M. Habert[2] came, accompanied by M. de Montigny, a gentleman of Brittany, with the view of letting me know, in the absence of my brother, who was at church, that M. Descartes, his compatriot and good friend, had expressed a strong desire to see my brother, for the sake of the great esteem in which both he and my father were everywhere held, and that he begged to be allowed to wait upon him next day at nine o'clock in the morning, if this would not inconvenience him, whom he knew to be an invalid.

[1] Cousin, Jacqueline Pascal, p. 94.

[2] "Evidently," says Cousin, "M. Habert de Montmor, the Mæcenas of the *savants* of the time."

When M. de Montigny proposed this, I felt hindered from giving a definite answer, because I knew that my brother was reluctant to force himself to conversation, especially in the morning. Nevertheless, I did not think it right to refuse, so we arranged that he should come at half-past ten next day. Along with M. Habert and M. de Montigny there were also a young man in the dress of a priest, whom I did not know, M. de Montigny's son, and two or three other young people. M. de Roberval, whom my brother had informed of the intended visit, was also present. After some civilities, talk fell upon the instrument [probably that which Pascal had used in the experiments], which was very much admired, while M. de Roberval showed it. Then they spoke of the idea of a vacuum; and M. Descartes, on hearing of the experiments, and being asked what he thought was within the tube (*dans la seringue*), said with great seriousness that it was some subtle matter, to which my brother replied what he could. M. Roberval, believing that my brother had difficulty in speaking, took up the reply to M. Descartes with some heat, yet with perfect civility. M. Descartes answered with some harshness that he would talk to my brother as much as he wished, because he spoke with reason, but not to any one who spoke with prejudice. Thereupon, finding from his watch it was mid-day, he rose, being engaged to dine at the Faubourg Saint Germain. M. Roberval also rose, in such a way that M. Descartes conducted him to a carriage, where the two were alone, and battled at one another more strongly than playfully, as M. Roberval, who returned here after dinner, told us. . . . I have forgotten to tell you that M. Descartes, annoyed at seeing so little of my brother, promised to return next day at eight o'clock. . . . He desired this, partly to consult regarding my brother's illness, as to which, however, he did not communicate anything of importance, only he counselled him to remain in bed every day as long as he could till he was tired, and to take plenty of soup. They spoke of many other things, for he was here till eleven o'clock, but I cannot tell you more particularly what they said, as I was not present on this occasion. We were prevented during

the whole day from making him take his early bath. He had found it give him a little headache, but that was because he had taken it too late; and I believe the bleeding at the foot on Sunday had done him good, for on Monday he conversed freely and strongly all day — in the morning with M. Descartes, and after dinner with M. de Roberval, with whom he argued for a long time on many things, both belonging to theology and physics, and yet he took no further harm than perspiring much, and slept rather sound during the night."

The revelations of this letter are very curious. The respectful desire of Descartes, already so distinguished, to make Pascal's acquaintance, and to enter into conversation with him; his resentment of Roberval's interference, and their earnest altercation, prolonged in the carriage after leaving Pascal's house; the evidently serious character of Pascal's maladies, and the watchful attention of his sister. It is clear through all that Descartes had been busily occupied with the same physical problems as Pascal, and that he was somewhat jealous of the results towards which Pascal and his friends were tending. Evidently there was a certain measure of unfriendliness between Roberval and Descartes. I am unable, however, to see any traces of a coterie surrounding Pascal and inimical to Descartes, as M. Cousin suggests.[1] If such a coterie existed at this time in Paris, of which the "hasty and jealous Roberval" was the centre, and which delighted in "abusing Descartes, and attacking him on all sides," Jacqueline's frank and lively letter seems enough to show that while Roberval was Pascal's friend and Descartes's disputant, there was nothing in the mean-

[1] Blaise Pascal. Préface de la nouvelle éd., p. 46. Œuvres, t. i. 1849.

time between Descartes and Pascal but courteous friendliness and a cordial feeling of mutual respect.

Descartes, however, in his retirement at Stockholm, plainly cherished the impression that Roberval's intimacy with Pascal prevented the latter from doing full justice to his scientific position and suggestions; and having as yet heard nothing, in June 1649, of the special results of Pascal's experiments on the Puy de Dôme in the preceding year, he wrote to his friend Carcavi to let him know about these.

"I pray you, let me know of the success of an experiment which Pascal is said to have made on the mountains of Auvergne. . . . I had the right to expect this of him rather than of you, because it was I who advised him two years ago to make the experiment, and who assured him that, although I had not made it, I had no doubt of its success. But *as he is the friend of M. Roberval, who professes not to be mine, I have some reason to think he follows his passions.*[1]

That letter was immediately communicated to Pascal by Carcavi, who was his intimate associate no less than Roberval. But it seems to have elicited no reply. Bossut[2] says that he despised it. On the other hand, Descartes's biographer and eulogist, Baillet, blames Pascal for having carefully kept out of view Descartes's name in all the accounts of his discoveries; and produces an array of passages from Descartes's letters, showing

[1] Jus mihi esset hoc ipsum ab ipso potius quam a te expectare, ideo quod ego ipsi, jam biennium effluxit, auctor fuerim ejus experimenti faciendi, eumque certum reddiderim, nec de successu non dubitare, quamquam id experimentum nunquam fecerim. Verum quoniam D. R. amicitia junctus est qui mihi ultro adversatus . . . non sine ratione credendum est eum sequi passiones amici sui.—Descartes, Epist. Amstelodami, 1683.

[2] Discours sur la Vie et les Ouvrages de Pascal, p. xviii.

plainly that his mind was in the line of discovery finally verified by the experiments in Auvergne.[1] It may be granted beyond doubt this was the case. It would ill become any admirer of Pascal to detract from the glory of Descartes. But it must be held no less firmly, that in the personal question raised by Descartes's letter, the balance of evidence is all in favour of Pascal. There are no indications that the two men ever met save on the occasion so frankly described by his sister Jacqueline. Before this Pascal had not only been busy with the subject, but says distinctly that he had meditated the experiment finally made on the Puy de Dôme from the time that he published his first researches.[2] It was not, indeed, till about six weeks after Descartes's visit, or on the 15th December 1647, that he communicated with M. Périer regarding these experiments, and his earnest desire that they should be made; and it was not till the following September, or about a year after Descartes's visit, that they were actually made. But it is incredible that Pascal could have written as he did if he had really, for the first time, been indebted to Descartes for the suggestion. Descartes's name is not mentioned in his correspondence with M. Périer, nor in any of his writings on the subject; and the delay in making the experiments is sufficiently explained by the facts stated by himself, that they could only be made effectually at

[1] Any reader curious as to how far Descartes had advanced in this matter may consult Montucla, Histoire des Mathématiques, vol. vi. p. 205. Montucla, no less than Baillet, writes with a clear bias in Descartes's favour.

[2] Récit de la grande Expérience de l'Équilibre des Liqueurs. Œuvres, t. iv. p. 301—"Je méditai dès lors l'expérience dont je fais voir ici le Récit."

some place of greater elevation than he could command —such as "Clermont, at the foot of the Puy de Dôme"— and by some person, such as M. Périer, on whose knowledge and accuracy he could rely. If we add to this the force of the statement already quoted from his letter to M. Ribeyre, four years afterwards, or in 1651, that he claimed the experiments as entirely "his own invention," and that he did so "boldly," the case seems put beyond all doubt—unless we are to suppose the author of the 'Provincial Letters' and the 'Thoughts' capable of wilful suppression of the truth. On the other hand, it is unnecessary to attribute to Descartes anything beyond a mistaken opinion of the value of certain statements which he had no doubt made to Pascal, and possibly some confusion of memory. And that this is not an unwarranted view appears from what he says in a subsequent letter to M. Carcavi, on the 17th August of the same year, 1649—that he was greatly interested in hearing of the success of the experiments, having two years before besought Pascal to make them, and assured him of success—because the supposed explanation was one, he adds, "entirely consistent with the principles of my philosophy, apart from which he [Pascal] would not have thought of it, his own opinion being quite contrary."[1] This may or may not be true. Pascal certainly held as long as he could to the old maxim of "Nature's abhorrence of a vacuum." "I do not think it allowable," he says in his letter to M. Périer, "to depart lightly from maxims handed down to us by anti-

[1] Intererat mea id rescire, ipse enim petii ab illo, jam exacto biennio, ut id faceret, eumque pulchri successus certum reddidi, quod esset omnino conforme meis Principiis, absque quo nunquam de eo cogitasset, eo quod contrariâ tenebatur sententiâ.—Ep. lxix., ibid.

quity, unless compelled by invincible proofs." But the notions of Descartes on the subject of a vacuum were at least as confused as those originally held by Pascal.[1] It is absurd, therefore, to suppose that the latter could have been indebted to the principles of the Cartesian philosophy—not to say that this is a very different suggestion from that of the former letter, that Descartes himself had advised the experiment to be made. Evidently the older philosopher wrote under vague and somewhat inflated ideas of the value of his labours and his conversation with Pascal; while the latter, again, absorbed in his own thoughts on the subject, and unconscious that he had received any special impulse from Descartes or his philosophy, naturally made no mention of his name. His silence when Descartes's accusation was communicated to him indicates the same somewhat lofty reserve and confidence in the independence of his own researches, rather than any contempt. He felt too sure of his position to think of defending himself, or of repelling what he no doubt regarded as not so much a deliberate assault on the value of his own work, as an exaggerated estimate by the other of his share in that work.

Pascal's researches regarding atmospheric pressure conducted him gradually to the examination of the general laws of the equilibrium of fluids.[2] It had been already determined that the pressure of a fluid on its base is as the product of the base multiplied by the height of the fluid, and that all fluids press equally on all sides of

[1] Professor Tait, article "Vacuum," Chambers's Encyclopedia.

[2] These further researches are expounded in two treatises, 'De l'Équilibre des Liqueurs,' and 'De la Pesanteur de l'Air,' supposed to have been written in 1653, but not published till 1663, after the author's death.

the vessels enclosing them. But it still remained to determine exactly the measure of the pressure, in order to deduce the general conditions of equilibrium. With the view of ascertaining this, Pascal made two unequal apertures in a vessel filled with fluid, and enclosed on all sides. He then applied two pistons to these apertures, pressed by forces proportional to the respective apertures, and the fluid remained *in equilibrio*. "Having established this truth by two methods equally ingenious and satisfactory, he deduced from it the different cases of the equilibrium of fluids, and particularly with solid bodies, compressible and incompressible, when either partly or wholly immersed in them."

"But the most remarkable part of his treatise on the 'Equilibrium of Fluids,'" continues Sir David Brewster, from whose exposition we quote,[1] "and one which of itself would have immortalised him, is his application of the general principle to the construction of what he calls the 'mechanical machine for multiplying forces,'[2] — an effect which, he says, may be produced to any extent we choose, as one may by means of this machine raise a weight of any magnitude. This new machine is the *Hydrostatic Press*, first introduced by our celebrated countryman, Mr Bramah.

"Pascal's treatise on the weight of the whole mass of air forms the basis of the modern science of Pneumatics. In order to prove that the mass of air presses by its weight on all the bodies which it surrounds, and also that it is elastic and compressible, a balloon half filled with air was carried to the top of the Puy de Dôme. It gradually inflated itself as it ascended, and when it reached the summit it was quite full and swollen, as if fresh air had been blown into it; or,

[1] North British Review, August 1844. Sir David in the main translates from M. Bossut's "Discours."

[2] Œuvres, t. iv. p. 187.

what is the same thing, it swelled in proportion as the weight of the column of air which pressed upon it diminished. When again brought down, it became more and more flaccid, and, when it reached the bottom, it resumed its original condition. In the nine chapters of which the treatise consists, he shows that all the phenomena or effects hitherto ascribed to the horror of a vacuum, arise from the weight of the mass of air; and after explaining the variable pressure of the atmosphere in different localities, and in its different states, and the rise of the water in pumps, he calculates that the whole mass of air round our globe weighs 8,983,889,440,000,000,000 French pounds.

"Having thus completed his researches respecting elastic and incompressible fluids, Pascal seems to have resumed with a fatal enthusiasm his mathematical studies: but, unfortunately for science, several of the works which he composed have been lost. Others, however, have been preserved, which entitle him to a high rank amongst the greatest mathematicians of the age. Of these, his 'Traité du Triangle Arithmétique,' his 'Tractatus de Numericis Ordinibus,' and his 'Problemata de Cycloide,' are the chief. By means of the *Arithmetical Triangle*, an invention equally ingenious and original, he succeeded in solving a number of theorems which it would have been difficult to demonstrate in any other way, and in finding the coefficients of different terms of a binomial raised to an even and positive power. The same principles enabled him to lay the foundation of the doctrine of probabilities, an important branch of mathematical science, which Huyghens, a few years afterwards, improved, and which the Marquis la Place and M. Poisson have so greatly extended. These treatises, with the exception of that on the Cycloid, were composed and printed in the year 1654, but were not published till 1668, after the death of the author."

Pascal's discoveries as to the cycloid belong to a later period of his life, after he had long forsaken the scientific studies which engrossed him at this time,

and had become an inmate of Port Royal. But, as we have already said, it is well to complete our view of his scientific labours in a single chapter.

During an access of severe toothache which, in 1658, deprived him of sleep, his thoughts fastened on certain problems connected with the cycloid. Fermat, Roberval, and Torricelli had all been occupied with the subject, and made some definite progress in ascertaining its properties. But much still remained to be done, and especially to resolve the problems connected with it in a "general and uniform manner." "Pascal," says Bossut, "devised within eight days, and in the midst of cruel sufferings, a method which embraced all the problems—a method founded upon the summation of certain series, of which he had given the elements in his writings accompanying his 'Traité du Triangle Arithmétique.' From this discovery there was only a step to that of the Differential and Integral Calculus; and it may be confidently presumed that, if Pascal had proceeded with his mathematical studies, he would have anticipated Leibnitz and Newton in the glory of their great invention."

Having communicated the result of his geometrical meditation to the Duc de Roannez and some of his other religious friends, they conceived the design of making it subservient to the triumph of religion. Pascal himself was an illustrious example that the highest mathematical genius and the humblest Christian piety might be united; but in order to give *éclat* to such an example, his friends proposed to propound publicly the questions solved by the great Port Royalist in his moments of suffering, and to offer prizes for the

best solutions given of them. This they did in June 1658. A programme was published making the offer of prizes of forty and twenty pistoles, for the best determination of the area and the centre of gravity of any segment of the cycloid, and the dimensions and centres of gravity of solids and half and quarter solids which the same curve would generate by revolving round an abscissa and an ordinate. The programme was put forth in the name of Amos Dettonville, the anagram of Pascal's assumed name as the writer of the 'Provincial Letters.' Huyghens, Sluzsius, a canon of the Cathedral of Liège, and Wren, the architect of St Paul's, sent in partial solutions of the problems—those of Wren especially attracting the interest of both Fermat and Roberval. But Wallis, of Oxford, and Lallouère, a Jesuit of Toulouse, were the only two competitors who treated all the problems proposed. It was held that they had not completely succeeded in solving them; and Dettonville published his own solution in an elaborate letter addressed to M. Carcavi, and in a treatise on the subject. Carcavi was an old friend of Pascal's father as well as of himself; and being a lawyer as well as a mathematician, the arrangement of the affair seems to have been intrusted to him. This did not save him, however, from attacks by the disappointed candidates, who accused him of unfairness; and Leibnitz has given his decision that both Wallis and Lallouère, in the treatises which they published, — which did not, however, appear till after Pascal's, — had succeeded in solving the problems. Upon such a point we cannot pretend to judge; but it may be safely said that the design of the Duc de Roannez was hardly realised in the issue.

It was sufficiently proved, indeed, that Pascal, in the midst of all his austerities and devotional exercises, was the same Pascal who had held his own both with Descartes and with the Jesuits. But the life of thought which survived in him no sooner touched the outer world of intellectual ambition, than it flamed forth into something of the passion of controversy which his pen had already kindled in another direction. Religion is best vindicated, not in the strifes of science, but by the beauty of its own activities.

Pascal's labours on the cycloid may be said to bring to a close his scientific career. There is still one invention, however, of a very practical kind, associated with the very last months of his life. Amongst the letters of Madame Périer, there is one of date March 24, 1662, addressed to M. Arnauld de Pompone[1]—a nephew of the great Arnauld — in which she gives a lively description of the success of an experiment "dans l'affaire des carrosses." The affair was nothing less than the trial on certain routes in Paris of what is now known as an "omnibus;" and the idea of such conveyances for the public—"carrosses à cinq sols," as they were called—is attributed to Pascal. It is certain that the privilege of running "carrosses à cinq sols" was granted to Pascal's friend, the Duc de Roannez, and to other noblemen, by royal patent, in January 1662, —and that the experiment, as described by Madame Périer, was made with great success in the following March, and that Pascal had an active interest in the undertaking. His sister tells that he had mortgaged his share of its first year's profits in order to provide

[1] Faugère, Lettres, &c., p. 80.

for the poor at Blois;[1] and a note from his own hand, appended to his sister's letter, shows with what eagerness he entered into the affair and hailed its success. It is singular to connect the name of Pascal, and that, too, during the last sad months of his life, with so world-wide a commonplace as the omnibus.

[1] Vie de Pascal.

CHAPTER III.

PASCAL IN THE WORLD.

PASCAL'S health, we have seen, was very delicate. His labours to perfect his arithmetical machine had seriously impaired it. The attack of partial paralysis, described by his niece, seems to have taken place in the early summer of 1647. As soon as he was able, he removed to Paris, where we find him settled with his younger sister in September of the same year. It was on the twenty-fifth of this month that Jacqueline writes from Paris of Descartes's memorable visits. One of the motives of his change of residence was no doubt to consult the best physicians of the day; and Descartes, who, amongst his other numerous gifts, had some skill in medicine, made his second visit to him partly as a physician. "He came in part," says Jacqueline, "to consult as to my brother's illness." He appears to have given him very sound advice, which, unfortunately, Pascal did not follow—"to lie in bed as much as he could, and take strong soup." On the contrary, he was "bled, bathed, and purged," after the usual medical routine of the time, apparently without any good effects, or any alleviation of his sufferings.

The father also returned to Paris in May 1648. The Provincial Parliament, with regained authority, had exacted the recall of the Intendants appointed by the Court. Étienne Pascal's services were remunerated by the dignity of a Counsellor of State, and he was set at liberty to rejoin his children. It was at this period that the struggle took place betwixt father and daughter as to the latter's determination to choose a religious life. Encouraged by her brother after his access of zeal at Rouen, Jacqueline was gradually more and more drawn towards piety. After their settlement in Paris they went frequently together to the Church of Port Royal de Paris, to listen to the sermons of M. Singlin, whose touching pictures of the beauty and perfection of the Christian life awoke in the youthful enthusiast the desire of entering Port Royal. She opened personal communications with the sainted head of the House, the Mère Angélique, and also with M. Singlin, who recognised in her all the marks of a true vocation, but who would not allow her to proceed further without her father's consent and approval. The brother at this time strongly sympathised with her aspirations, and favoured them. On the father's arrival in Paris, the design of his daughter was imparted to him. He was greatly surprised and moved by the proposition—pleased, on the one hand, by his daughter's devotion, and yet deeply wounded by the idea of parting with her. He took time for consideration, and at length made up his mind that it was impossible to give his consent. Not only so, but he strongly blamed his son, who had broken the matter to him, for encouraging his sister's design without first ascertaining whether it would be agreeable to himself,

and he seems for the time to have felt so much distrust in them both, that he instructed an old domestic, who had been with them from their youth, to watch over their actions. This is the narrative of Madame Périer;[1] and the unpleasantness which arose out of this event appears also implied in Jacqueline's letter to her sister in the spring of the same year.[2]

In 1649 the Pascal family left Paris for Auvergne, and seem to have remained there for about a year and a half. Madame Périer says nothing of this visit, so far as her brother is concerned, beyond the fact that he accompanied Jacqueline and her father. The likelihood, however, is, that the visit was in some degree prompted by a regard for Pascal's health. He had made in Paris some progress towards recovery, notwithstanding the severity of his treatment. But he was still far from well, and it was judged necessary, "in order to re-establish him entirely, that he should abandon every sort of mental occupation, and seek, as much as he could, opportunities of amusing himself." Her brother, she adds, was very reluctant to take this advice, "because he saw its danger." At length, however, he yielded, "considering himself obliged to do all he could to restore his health, and because he thought that trivial amusements could not harm him. So he set himself on the world." When this definite change in Pascal's life began is left uncertain, but there are indications that he had largely abandoned his studies in 1649 and the following year. During these years there is nothing from his pen. The interval between the "recital" of the experiments on the Puy de Dôme (1648), and his letter to M. Ribeyre,

[1] Cousin, Vie de Jacqueline, p. 43. [2] Ibid., p. 101.

12th July 1651, is blank in any record of scientific or literary labour. This is not conclusive, of course, that he was idle; but taken in connection with the remarks of his sister, and the retirement to Auvergne, it suggests that the family may have sought there, in rural isolation and domestic reunion, the means of entirely withdrawing Pascal from his severer studies, and the scientific companions who were constantly prompting them in Paris. It may be, also, that the father sought the means of withdrawing Jacqueline from the neighbourhood of Port Royal, and from the equally exciting associations to her connected with that neighbourhood.

Of Pascal's life at this time in Auvergne we know nothing, or next to nothing. There is, indeed, a single trace, of which the most has been made, in the Memoirs of Fléchier, describing his stay at Clermont in 1665 and 1666, a few years after Pascal's death. In these Memoirs, Fléchier relates an anecdote of a young lady "who was the Sappho of the country," and greatly beloved by all the *beaux esprits* of the time. Amongst others, "M. Pascal, who had then acquired so much reputation, and another *savant*, were continually with this *belle savante*." It is difficult to know what to make of this vague if piquant anecdote. Some of Pascal's more religious admirers have even been scandalised by it, and have tried to show that it could not refer to the author of the 'Pensées.' M. Cousin and other parties have emphasised it too much.[1] There seems no reason to doubt that the anecdote relates to the younger Pascal—it cannot reasonably be supposed to relate to his father. Nor is there any ground to suppose that Pascal

[1] B. Pascal, app. vii. p. 491.

was less likely to be interested in a beautiful and accomplished *demoiselle* than any other young man of his age. On the contrary, there is some reason to think him at this time peculiarly susceptible to the charms of female companionship. The passing glimpse which the story gives of his occupations in Auvergne, and the comparative brightness and leisure in which it seems to set his life for a little, are pleasing. It suggests the idea that the change to the country had worked successfully, and that with rest and retirement from Paris his health had greatly benefited.

It is a very different picture we get of the once brilliant Jacqueline. If her father had cherished any hopes of restoring her again to the world, he was destined to disappointment. With her conversion at Rouen, and her association with M. Singlin and Port Royal, her old life seems entirely to have died out. Even her old pleasure in making verses was renounced at the bidding of Port Royal. She was told "that it was a talent of which God would not take any account—it was necessary to bury it," and this although she only exerted it now in the service of religion and the Church. While Madame Périer has given us no details, and, indeed, no facts whatever, of her brother's life at this time, she has given us a minute picture of Jacqueline's austerities. In everything save in name she had already become a nun. She wore a dress approaching as nearly as possible to a religious habit; she fasted and kept vigils; she spent her whole time either in the house alone, absorbed in religious ecstasy, or abroad in works of active charity; in every way she made it plainly to be known that it was only her father's wish that kept her in the world at all.

After a stay in Auvergne of seventeen months, the family returned to Paris in November 1650. There we still read of the pious labours and devotion of Jacqueline —little or nothing of her brother. How far the leisure of country life may have weaned him from his old pursuits, how far the world had begun to exercise a new attraction over him, we learn nothing. It is evident from his letter to M. Périer on his father's death, nearly a year after this, that he still cherished strongly his religious convictions. Yet there is nothing in all this time to tell of his religious profession; and Madame Périer plainly does not care to dwell upon it, but hurries forward to the later and more edifying period of his career. The impression is left upon us that worldly distractions had already begun to influence his life.

These distractions rapidly acquired force after the father's death in the autumn of 1651 (September). The devoted Jacqueline attended his last moments with assiduous tenderness; but no sooner was the event over than she renewed her determination to enter Port Royal. The issue cannot be so well described as in Madame Périer's words:—

"Being ill," she says, "I was unable to leave Paris till the end of November. In this interval, my brother, who was greatly afflicted, and had received much consolation from my sister, imagined that her affection would make her remain with him at least a year. . . . He spoke to her on the subject, but in such a manner as to convey the impression that she would not so far contradict him for fear of redoubling his grief. This led her to dissemble her intention till our arrival. Then she told me that her resolution was fixed to adopt a religious life as soon as our respective shares [of the father's property] were arranged. She would, how-

ever, spare my brother by leading him to suppose she only meditated a retreat! With this view, she disposed of everything in my presence; our shares were settled on the last day of December; and she fixed upon the 4th of January for carrying out her decision. On the evening before, she begged me to say something to my brother, that he might not be taken by surprise. I did so with all the precaution I could; but although I hinted that it was only a retreat, with the view of knowing something of the sort of life, he did not fail to be deeply touched. He withdrew very sad to his chamber without seeing my sister, who was then in a small cabinet where she was accustomed to retire for prayer. She did not come out till my brother had left, as she feared his look would go to her heart. I told her for him what words of tenderness he had spoken; and after that we both retired. Though I consented with all my heart to what my sister was doing, because I thought it was for her the highest good, the greatness of her resolution astonished and occupied my mind so that I could not sleep all night. At seven o'clock, when I saw that my sister was not up, I concluded that she was no longer sleeping, and feared that she might be ill. Accordingly, I went to her bed, where I found her still fast asleep. The noise I made awoke her; she asked me what o'clock it was. I told her; and having inquired how she was, and if she had slept well, she said she was very well, and that she had slept excellently. So she rose, dressed, and went away, doing this, as everything else, with a tranquillity and equanimity inconceivable. We said no adieu for fear of breaking down. I only turned aside when I saw her ready to go. In this manner she quitted the world on the 4th January 1652, being then exactly twenty-six years and three months old."[1]

Our readers will not grudge this extract, so touching in its simplicity. What a living picture does it give us of this remarkable family!—the elder sister's wakeful

[1] Vie de Jacqueline.

anxiety—the younger's calm determination—the brother's half-suppressed yet deeply-moved tenderness—the proud and sensitive reserve of all the three. Jacqueline's firmness was heroic, but her heart was full of concern. She had escaped the half-authoritative, half-supplicating entreaties of her brother, and found refuge for her long-cherished solicitudes of heart in the bosom of Port Royal, and the strong counsels both of the Mère Angélique and the Mère Agnès. But after a while this did not satisfy her. When the time came to make her profession, she was anxious to do so, not merely with her own consent, but with her brother's. And accordingly, she addressed him in the following March a remarkable letter, in which, while reminding him that she was her own mistress to do as she wished in a matter so seriously affecting her life, she yet prayed him to give her a kindly greeting in her solemn act, and to come to the ceremony of her taking the vows. The letter breathes at once the affection of a sister and the passion of a saint,—the proud firmness so characteristic of the family, with a charming sweetness, blending entreaty with command. She signs herself already "Sister of Sainte Euphémie," the name which she adopted as an inmate of Port Royal, addressing her brother for the most part with the grave formal "you," but now and then relapsing into the old familiar "thou," as if she were still in the family home.

"Do not take that away," she says,[1] "which you cannot give. If it is true that the world has preserved some impressions of the friendship which it showed for me when I was with it, please God this should not turn me from quitting it, nor you from consenting to my doing so. This ought rather

[1] Cousin's Jacqueline, p. 189.

to be my glory, and your joy, and that of all my true friends, as showing the strength of my God, and that it is not the world which quits me, but I that quit the world, and that the effort which it makes to retain me is to be regarded as only a visible punishment of the complacency with which I formerly regarded it, and which it now pleases God to give me power to resist. . . . Do not hinder those who do well; and do well yourself; or if you have not the strength to follow me, at least do not hold me back. Do not render me ungrateful to God for the grace which He has given to one whom you love. . . . I wait this proof of your brotherly friendship, and pray you to come to my divine betrothal, which will take place, God helping, on Trinity Sunday. I wrote also to my faithful one [her sister Gilberte]. I beg you to console her, if there is need, and encourage her. It is only for the sake of form that I ask you to be present at the ceremony; for I do not believe you have any thought of failing me. Be assured that I must renounce you if you do."

The result of this moving appeal was to bring her brother to her side.

"He came the following day very much put out," she says, "with a bad headache, the result of my letter, yet also very much softened, for instead of the two years which he had formerly insisted on, he wished me merely to wait till All Saints' Day. But seeing me firm not to delay, yet willing to give him some further time to think over the matter, he melted entirely, and expressed pity for the trouble which had made me delay so long a result which I had so long and so ardently desired. He did not return at the appointed time; but M. d'Andilly, at my request, had the goodness to send for him on Saturday, and undertook the matter with so much warmth, and yet skill, that he consented to everything we wished."[1]

Jacqueline gained her point so far; but painful diffi-

[1] Cousin's Jacqueline, p. 161.

culties still remained, the story of which she herself has also told us.[1] While eager to be admitted to the full privileges of her vocation, she did not wish to enter Port Royal empty-handed. She thought herself free to endow it with the share of her father's fortune which had fallen to her, and seems not to have doubted her brother's and sister's concurrence in this act of liberality. But they, on the contrary, were both for a time deeply offended that she should apparently prefer strangers to her own kindred. They took the matter "in an entirely secular manner." This greatly grieved her in turn; and, balked at once in her wishes and her sisterly trust, she pictures in the most lively colours the distress she endured. La Mère Agnès consoled her in her disappointment, and sought to carry her thoughts beyond the mere chagrin which so obviously mingled with her higher feeling. Her own somewhat resentful obstinacy gradually yielded to the pure passivity of resignation — so strong in its seeming weakness — which the sister of Arnauld preached to her. At length she is content to make no further demands upon her brother. He and Madame Périer shall do as they wish; the money would not be blessed unless it came from free hearts, and was given for the love of God. She is willing even to be received gratuitously as a sister—a feeling evidently not without its bitterness. Her submission became, as may be guessed, her triumph; a result probably not unforeseen by the deeper experience of La Mère Agnès and M. Singlin.

[1] Relation de la Sœur Jacqueline de Sainte-Euphémie Pascal à Port Royal, 10 Juin 1653—a long narrative, extending to about 50 pages of Cousin's volume. See also Lettres, Opuscules, &c., ed. by Faugère, pp. 177-222.

When her brother—"he who had most interest in the affair"—at last came to see her, she endeavoured to meet him as the Mother advised. "But with all her effort" she could not hide the sadness of her heart.

"This," she says, "was so unlike my usual manner, that he perceived it at once; and there was no need of an interpreter to explain the cause, for though I put on the best face I could, he easily guessed that it was his own conduct which was the cause of my uneasiness. All the same, he was desirous of making the first complaint; and then I learned that both he and my sister felt themselves much aggrieved by what I had written. He dwelt on this, but could hardly go on, seeing I made no complaint on my side. Otherwise, I could have destroyed by a single word all his reasons!"

A true family trait! The result of all was, that Pascal yielded to the tender resignation of his sister what he had refused to her arguments. He was so "touched," she says, "with confusion, that he resolved to put the whole affair in order," and to undertake himself any risks or charges that it might involve.

But the heads of the House required to be satisfied, no less than Jacqueline. They were not disposed to accept any gift which was not freely and piously given. Accordingly, before the final disposition of the property was made, La Mère Angélique took care that Pascal should understand the matter anew from the Port-Royalist point of view. St Cyran had taught them that they were never "to receive anything for the house of God but that which came from God." Even he was not a little surprised, according to the statement of his sister, at all this scrupulousness—"the manner in which we deal with such matters;" and the men of business whose

presence was necessary on the occasion are represented as astonished beyond measure. "They had never seen business done in such a way." At length, however, all was completed. Pascal professed the genuineness of his motives, and only regretted that it was not in his power to do more.

If this narrative mainly concerns Jacqueline Pascal, it serves to throw light upon the character and life of her brother at this time. In the course of her "relation," Jacqueline, or her interlocutor La Mère Agnès, makes frequent allusion to Pascal's "worldly life." When she is vexed that he will not carry out her desires in the matter of the dowry, she is reminded that she had far more reason to be distressed by the "faults and infidelities" into which he had fallen towards God.[1] He is represented as being so much engrossed with the vanities and amusements of the world as to prefer his own pleasure and advantage to the good of a religious community or the pious gratification of his sister. It was only by some miracle that it could be otherwise; and there was no reason to "expect a miracle of grace in a person like him."[2] All the means at his command were hardly sufficient to enable him to live in the world "like others of his condition," and the associates with whom he was known to be mingling.[3]

Plainly at this time Pascal was abandoned by Port Royal. He had "set himself," as his sister briefly says, "on the world." As his niece more particularly indicates,[4] he had given himself up to the amusements of life. Unable to study, the love of leisure and of

[1] Relation de la Sœur Jacqueline, &c., p. 182. [2] Ibid., p. 187.
[3] Ibid., p. 194. [4] Mémoire, Faugère, p. 453.

fashionable society had gradually gained upon him. At first he was moderate in his worldly enjoyments; but a taste for them insensibly sprang up and carried him far away from his old associations and the pious severities of his former life. After his father's death this change was more clearly marked. He was master of his own affairs, and he plunged more freely into the pleasures of society, although always, it is distinctly said, "without any vice or licentiousness." All this, his niece adds, was very grievous to her aunt Jacqueline, who grieved in spirit at seeing him who had been the means of making her learn the nothingness of the world return to its vanities.

Too much is not to be made of such statements, or the still stronger expressions of Jacqueline herself in her letters regarding her brother's final conversion. When she speaks of "wretched attachments" binding him to the world, and of his being still "haunted by the smell of the mud which he had embraced with such *empressement*,"[1] we are to remember that she speaks not only out of the severity of her own youthful judgment, (and what judgment is so severe at times as that of youth?) but out of the mouth of Port Royal. She condemns a world which was no doubt bad enough, but of which she knew nothing. Her allusions to the "grandeur" of her brother's life and similar indications have led Sainte-Beuve and others to speak of his extravagance at this time. He is supposed not only to have lived in the world, but to have lived in a style above his means—the companion of men of higher social position than himself, profuse in their habits and expenditure.

[1] Jacqueline Pascal, pp. 237, 244.

That he lived in the midst of society of this kind can hardly be doubted. It is more doubtful how far his own habits had become those of an extravagant man of the world. His chief companion was one who remained bound to him through all the rest of his life, Pascal's influence having drawn him also from the world when the time of his own change came. This was the Duc de Roannez, a young man of fewer years than himself, who seems to have possessed many attractive qualities. He was devoted to Pascal—could hardly "bear him out of his sight," as Marguerite Périer says—and Pascal warmly returned his friendship. It seems as if they had lived together a good deal, or at least that Pascal spent the most of his time with the young Duke; and it was in his house and society no doubt that he tasted the joys and perils of that fashionable and luxurious life of which his sister speaks so bitterly.[1] It was a life, after all, of thoughtless enjoyment rather than of any deeper folly. Both men were as yet very young—the Duke only twenty-two years of age, and Pascal twenty-eight. After his simple and severe training, and the society of his Jansenist friends, it must have been a change full of excitement, possibly of moral danger, to the once enthusiastic student; for the society of the time was charged with the elements both of sceptical and moral indifference. It has been even said that "no society was ever more grandly dissolute" than that of the Fronde, "when women like La Barette[2]

[1] Marguerite Périer says that Pascal had always a room at the Duc de Roannez's, and that he stayed there frequently, although he had a house of his own in Paris.

[2] Lélut, p. 234. Women throughout this time took the lead, and were never so active, even in French politics. "Beautiful,

and La Couronne took the lead in the least discreet pleasures."

Among the men whom Pascal evidently met at the hotel of the Duc de Roannez, and with whom he formed something of a friendship, was the well-known Chevalier de Méré, whom we know best as a tutor of Madame de Maintenon, and whose graceful but flippant letters still survive as a picture of the time. He was a gambler and libertine, yet with some tincture of science and professed interest in its progress. In his correspondence there is a letter to Pascal, in which he makes free in a somewhat ridiculous manner with the young geometrician already so distinguished. Other names still less reputable—those of Miton and Desbarreaux, for example—have been associated with Pascal during this period. Miton was undoubtedly an intimate ally of De Méré, and amidst all his dissoluteness, made pretensions to scientific knowledge and attainments as a writer. Desbarreaux was a companion of both, but of a still lower grade—a man of open profligacy, and a despiser of the rites of the Church. Along with Miton and other boon companions, he is spoken of as betaking himself to St Cloud for carnival during the Holy Week.[1] The truth would seem to be that all these men came across Pascal's path at this time, and were more or less known to him. His allusions to both Miton and Desbarreaux in the 'Pensées' imply this. There is a certain familiarity of knowledge indicated in the very

witty, and dissolute, they brought into public affairs their frivolous ideas, and sacrificed to their vanity their honour and that of their houses."—La Vallée, Hist. des Français, t. iii. p. 195, quoted in Kitchin's Hist. of France, vol. iii. p. 114.

[1] Lélut, p. 238.

heartiness with which he assails them—speaking of Miton as "hateful,"[1] and of Desbarreaux as having renounced reason and made himself a "brute."[2] But it is against all probability, no less than against all the facts known to us, to suppose that Pascal had more connection with such men than meeting them in the society in which he moved during these years, and becoming well acquainted with the intellectual and moral atmosphere which they breathed. It may be too much to say, with Faugère, that he was then consciously imbibing the experience to be afterwards utilised in his great work, or that it was the principles professed by these men which gave him the first idea of such a work; but we may certainly say that the knowledge of them, as well as all the knowledge he acquired at this time, served to deepen and extend his moral intuitions, and to give a finer point to many of his Thoughts. And no student of Pascal can doubt that "if his feet touched for a moment the dirt of this dissolute society, his divine wings remained unsoiled."[3]

A more interesting point than any, however, still remains in connection with this period of his life. It was now, or soon after, that Pascal must have composed the "Discours sur les Passions de l'Amour," one of the most exquisite fragments which have come from his pen,—remarkable both in itself and in the circumstances of its discovery by M. Cousin about thirty years ago. M. Cousin has himself related these circumstances in minute detail, and with a certain self-elation.[4] According to M. Faugère, there was no particular difficulty,

[1] Pensées, éd. de M. Faugère, t. i. p. 197. [2] Ibid., t. ii. p. 91.
[3] Faugère, Introduction. [4] Blaise Pascal, App. No. 7.

and therefore no particular merit, in the discovery. The fragment was clearly indexed in a catalogue of the Pascal MSS. in the well-known State library of Paris as follows: "Discours sur les Passions de l'Amour, par M. Pascal," and again in the body of the volume the fragment was entitled, "Discours, &c., on l'attribue à M. Pascal." The genuineness of the fragment seems admitted on all hands. "In the first line," says Cousin, "I felt Pascal, and my conviction of its authorship grew as I proceeded—his ardent and lofty manner, half thought, half passion, and that speech so fine and grand, an accent which I would recognise amongst a thousand."[1] "The soul and thought of Pascal," says Faugère, "shine everywhere in the pages, steeped in a melancholy at once chaste and ardent."[2]

The following extracts may give some idea of this remarkable paper. It commences in an abstract, aphoristic manner not uncommon with Pascal:—

"Man is born to think; he is never a moment without thinking. But pure thought, which, if it could be sustained, would make him happy, fatigues and prostrates him. He could not live a life of mere thought; movement and action are necessary to him. He must be agitated by the passions, whose sources he feels deep and strong in his heart. The passions most characteristic of man, and which embrace most others, are love and ambition. They have no affinity, yet they are often united; together, they tend to weaken if not destroy each other. For however grand the human spirit, it is only capable at once of one great passion. When love and ambition meet, each therefore falls short of what it would otherwise be. Age determines neither the beginning nor the end of these two passions. They are born with the first years, they continue often to the last."

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[1] Blaise Pascal, App. No. 7.

[2] Introd. to Ed. of Pensées.

"Man finds no full scope for love in himself, yet he loves. It is necessary, therefore, for him to seek an object of love elsewhere. This he can only find in beauty. But as he himself is the most beautiful creature that God has made, he must find in himself the type of that beauty which he seeks elsewhere. This defines and embodies itself in the difference of sex. A woman is the highest form of beauty. Endowed with mind, she is its living and marvellous personation. If a beautiful woman wishes to please, she will always succeed. The fascinations of beauty in such a case never fail to captivate, whatever man may do to resist them. There is a spot in every heart which they reach."

"Love is of no age; it is always being born. The poets tell us so, and hence we represent it as a child. It creates intelligence, and feeds upon intelligence. . . . We exhaust our power of gratifying it every day, and yet every day it is necessary to renew its gratification."

"Man in solitude is an incomplete being; he needs companionship for happiness. He seeks this commonly in a like condition with his own, because habits of desire and opportunity in such a case are most readily found by him. But *sometimes he fixes his affections on an object far beyond his rank*, and the flame burns the more intensely that he is forced to conceal it in his own bosom. When we love one of elevated condition, ambition may at first coexist with affection. But love soon becomes the master. It is a tyrant which suffers no rival; it must reign alone. Every other emotion must subserve and obey its dictates. A high attachment fills the heart more completely than a common and equal one. Small things are carried away in the great capacity of love."

"The pleasure of loving, without daring to say anything of one's love, has its pains, but also its sweetnesses. With what transport do we regulate all our actions with the view of pleasing one whom we infinitely value! . . . The fulness of love sometimes languishes, receiving no succour from the beloved object. Then we fall into misery; and hostile passions, lying in wait for the heart, tear it in a thousand pieces. But anon a ray of hope—the very least it may be—raises us

as high as ever. Sometimes this comes from mere dalliance, but sometimes also from an honest pity. How happy such a moment when it comes!"

"The first effect of love is to inspire a great respect. We revere whom we really love. This is right, and we know nothing in the world so grand as this. . . . In love we forget fortune, parents, friends, and the reason of this is that we imagine we need nothing else than the object of our love. The heart is full; there is no room for care nor disquietude. Passion is then necessarily in excess; there is a plenitude in it which resists the commencement of reflection. Yet love and reason are not to be opposed, and love has always reason with it, although it implies a precipitation of thought which carries us away without due examination. Otherwise we should be very disagreeable machines. Do not exclude reason from love, therefore; they are truly inseparable. The poets are wrong in representing love as blind. It is necessary to take away his veil, and give him henceforth the joy of sight."

"It is not merely the result of custom, but a dictate of nature, that man should make the first advances in love. . . . Great souls require an inundation of passion to disturb and fill them; but when they begin to love, they love supremely. . . . When we are away from the object of our love we resolve to do and say many things, but when we are present we hesitate. The explanation is, that at a distance the reason is undisturbed, but in presence of the beloved object it is strangely moved. In love we fear to hazard lest we lose all. It is necessary to advance, yet who can tell to what point? We tremble always till we reach this point, and yet prudence does not help us to keep it when we have found it. . . . There is nothing so embarrassing as to be in love, and see something in our favour without daring to believe in it. Hope and fear rage within us, and the last too often triumphs."

The question arises, What interpretation are we to put on these chaste yet glowing sentences? It seems hardly

possible to believe that they were not penned out of some real experience. Pascal was not the man to busy himself in writing an imaginary essay on such a subject. Nothing can be conceived less like the sketch of a mere moral analyst standing outside the passion he describes. There may be a tendency here and there to over-analysis, and to the balancing of antitheses now on one side and now on the other; but there is the breath of true passion all through the piece, and touching, as with fire, many of its many fine utterances. Who was then, conceivably, the object of Pascal's affections? We have it on the authority of his niece that at this time, when he lived so much as the companion of the Duc de Roannez, he contemplated marrying and settling in the world.[1] This, and the indications of the piece itself, have led to the conjecture that he was in love with the sister of his friend. Charlotte Gouffier de Roannez was then about sixteen years of age, endowed with captivating graces of form and manner, animated by a sweet intelligence and by that charm of spiritual sympathy so likely to prove attractive to a man like Pascal. Occupying rooms in the house of his friend, who, we have seen, could not bear him out of his sight, Pascal and Mademoiselle de Roannez were necessarily much in each other's society. What so natural as that he should fall in love, and overlooking all disparity of rank, cherish the secret hope of a union with one so gifted and beautiful?—or why may not ambition have mingled with his love, as he himself implies, and carried him for a time into a dreamland from which all shadows fell away?

[1] Il prit la résolution de suivre le train commun du monde, c'est-à-dire de prendre une charge et se marier.—Faugère, p. 453.

It is impossible to do more than form conjectures in such a matter. To M. Faugère nothing seems more probable. M. Cousin resents the supposition as derogatory to Pascal, and as utterly inconsistent with the usages of the age of Louis XIV. But even were it impossible, according to the usages of the time, that Pascal should have ever married Mademoiselle de Roannez, this is no proof that he may not have fallen in love with her. There is much in this paper that favours the idea, that while Pascal loved deeply he yet never told his love; and the social obstacles, which for a time may have seemed to him surmountable, at last may have shut out all hope from his heart. Many causes might unite to do this, even supposing his love was returned. It is certain that he continued the warm friend, not only of the Duc de Roannez, but of his sister; and in after-years a correspondence was established betwixt them implying the highest degree of mutual esteem and confidence. We have only the letters of Pascal; nothing is known of those of Mademoiselle de Roannez; the rigidity of the Jansenist copyists have given us only extracts even of the former. All trace of earthly passion, if it ever existed, has gone from the pious page in which the Jansenist saint sets forth his exhortations. Yet it argues no common interest, that Pascal should pause in the midst of his conflict with the Jesuits to advise and direct his former companion; and Faugère professes that even before he had read the 'Discours' he could trace a "tender solicitude"—more than the mere impulse of Christian charity—beneath all the grave severity of his religious phrases.

The fate of Mademoiselle de Roannez was not a

happy one. After vacillating for some time between the cloister and the world—obeying the guidance of Pascal, either directly or through Madame Périer, and even passing through her novitiate at Port Royal with "extraordinary fervour"—she was persuaded to marry and become the Duchesse de la Feuillade. But her marriage proved unfortunate. Her children died young; her own health broke down; she herself at length died under an operation, bequeathing a legacy to Port Royal, which had remained entwined with all dearest associations. Whether Pascal and she had loved each other or not, this sacred Home bound their best thoughts together, and serves to recall their highest aspirations.

It falls to us now to describe how Port Royal claimed the heart of Pascal, and called forth the chief activities of his remaining years.

CHAPTER IV.

PORT ROYAL AND PASCAL'S LATER YEARS.

WHATEVER day-dreams Pascal may have cherished, "God called him," as his sister says, "to a great perfection." It was not in his nature to be satisfied with either the enchantments or ambitions of the world. All the while that he mixed in the luxurious society of Paris, and seemed merely one of its thoughtless throng, there were throbs within him of a higher life which could not be stilled. His conscience reproached him continually amidst all his amusements, and left him uneasy even in the most exulting moments of the love that filled his heart. This is no hypothetical picture, but one suggested by himself in conversation with his sister. She tells us from her retreat how her brother came to see her, fascinated by the steadfastness of her faith, in contrast with his own indifference and vacillation. Formerly it was his zeal which had drawn her to higher thoughts. Now it is the attraction of her piety which sways him, and leaves him unhappy amidst all the seductions of the society in which he mingles. "God made use of my sister," says Madame Périer, "for the great design, as

He had formerly made use of my brother, when He desired to withdraw my sister from her engagements in the world."

The severe Jacqueline tells with unfaltering breath the story of her brother's spiritual anxieties. She had ceased herself to have any worldly thoughts.

"She led," says Madame Périer, "a life so holy, that she edified the whole house: and in this state it was a special pain to her to see one to whom she felt herself indebted, under God, for the grace which she enjoyed, no longer himself in possession of these graces: and as she saw my brother frequently, she spoke to him often, and finally with such force and sweetness, that she persuaded him, as he had at first persuaded her, absolutely to abandon the world."

Writing to her sister on the 25th of January 1655, she says that Pascal came to see her at the end of the previous September.

"At this visit he opened himself to me in such a manner as moved my pity, confessing that in the midst of his exciting occupations, and of so many things fitted to make him love the world—to which we had every reason to think him strongly attached—he was yet forcibly moved to quit all; both by an extreme aversion to its follies and amusements, and by the continual reproach made by his conscience. He felt himself detached from his surroundings in such a manner as he had never felt before, or even approaching to it; yet, otherwise, he was in such abandonment that there was no movement in his heart to God. Though he sought Him with all his power, he felt that it was more his own reason and spirit that moved him towards what he knew to be best, than any movement of the Divine Spirit. If he only had the Divine sentiments he once had, he believed himself, in his present state of detachment, capable of undertaking every-

thing. It must be, therefore, some wretched ties[1] which still held him back, and made him resist the movements of the Divine Spirit. The confession surprised me as much as it gave me joy; and thenceforth I conceived hopes that I had never had, and thought I must communicate with you in order to induce you to pray on his behalf. If I were to relate all the other visits in detail, I should be obliged to write a volume; for since then they have been so frequent and so long, that I was wellnigh engrossed by them. I confined myself to watching his mood without attempting unduly to influence him; and gradually I saw him so growing in grace that I would hardly have known him. I believe you will have the same difficulty, if God continues His work; especially in such wonderful humility, submission, diffidence, self-contempt, and desire to be nothing in the esteem and memory of men. Such he is at present. God alone knows what a day will bring forth."

Finally, after many visits and struggles with himself, especially as to his choice of a spiritual guide, he became an inmate of Port Royal des Granges, under the guidance of M. de Saci. The questions betwixt him and his sister as to his selection of a confessor or director are very curious, revealing, as they do, the quiet self-possessed decision of the one, the scruples of the other, and the proud self-respect of both. As to one of Pascal's difficulties, she says, without misgiving—"I saw clearly that this was only a remnant of independence hidden in the depth of his heart, which armed itself with every weapon to ward off a submission which yet in his state of feeling must be perfect." M. Singlin was willing to assist the sister with his advice, but was reluctant him-

[1] "D'horribles attaches"—an expression already alluded to, which has given rise to a good deal of speculation.—Jacqueline Pascal, Cousin, p. 237.

self, in his weak state of health, to assume full responsibilities towards the brother. Jacqueline herself appeared to him the best director her brother could have for the time; and there is a charming blending of humility and yet assumption in the manner in which she relates this, and speaks of "our new convert." But finally there is found in M. de Saci a director "with whom he is delighted, for he comes of a good stock" (dont il est tout ravi, aussi est-il de bonne race).

Pascal first sought retirement in a residence of his own in the country. It is particularly mentioned amongst the reasons for his withdrawal from Paris, that the Duc de Roannez, "who engaged him almost entirely," was about to return there. Unable to find everything to his wish, however, in his own house, "he obtained a chamber or little cell among the Solitaries of Port Royal," from which he wrote to his sister with extreme joy that he was lodged and treated like a prince, "according to St Bernard's judgment of what it was to be a prince." It is still Jacqueline's pen which reports all this to Madame Périer. She continues in the same letter:—

"He joins in every office of the Church from Prime to Compline, without feeling the slightest inconvenience in rising at five o'clock in the morning; and as if it was the will of God that he should join fasting to watching, in defiance of all the medical prescriptions which had forbidden him both the one and the other, he found that supper disagreed with him, and was about to give it up."[1]

Such is the story of Pascal's final conversion and retirement from the world. Jacqueline's details fill in the briefer sketch of Madame Périer, and both tell the

[1] Cousin, Jacqueline Pascal, pp. 236-241.

story at first hand. None could have known so well as they did all the circumstances. It is remarkable, therefore, that neither of them says anything of the well-known incident, emphasised by Bossut as the mainly exciting cause of his great change:—

"One day," it is said, "in the month of October 1654, when he went, according to his habit, to take his drive to the bridge of Neuilly in *a carriage and four*, the two leading horses became restive at a part of the road where there was a parapet, and precipitated themselves into the Seine. Fortunately, the first strokes of their feet broke the traces which attached them to the pole, and the carriage was stayed on the brink of the precipice. The effect of such a shock on one of Pascal's feeble health may be imagined. He swooned away, and was only restored with difficulty, and his nerves were so shattered that long afterwards, during sleepless nights and during moments of weakness, he seemed to see a precipice at his bedside, over which he was on the point of falling."

This alarming incident, which comes from nearly contemporary tradition, no doubt contributed to Pascal's retirement from the world, and no less probably also a strange vision he had at this time, to which we shall afterwards advert. But it is peculiarly interesting to trace the inner history of Pascal's great change. Evidently, from what his sister says, his mind had been for some time very ill at ease in the great world in which he lived. How far this was the working of his old religious convictions continually renewing their influence through the conversation of his sister, how far it was mere weariness and disgust with the frivolities of fashionable life, and how far it may have been baffled hope and the disenchantments of a broken dream of love, we cannot clearly tell. All may have moved him, and brought

him to that strange state of isolation which she describes from his own account. But plainly the world-weariness preceded the fresh dawn of divine strength in his heart; and there is a tone of hopelessness in speaking of his detachment from all the things surrounding him, which favours the thought that some new and unwonted smart had entered into his life, and driven him forth to the quiet shelter, where at length he found his old peace with God, and the great mission to which God had called him.

The monastery of Port Royal, in which his sister had already found a home, remains indelibly associated with Pascal. It was founded in the beginning of the thirteenth century, in the reign of Philip Augustus; and a later tradition claimed this magnificent monarch as the author of its foundation and of its name. It is said that one day he wandered into the famous valley during the chase, and became lost in its woods, when he was at length discovered near to an ancient chapel of St Lawrence, which was much frequented by the devout of the neighbourhood, and that, grateful because the place had been to him a Port Royal or royal refuge, he resolved to build a church there. But this is the story of a time when, as it has been said, "royal founders were in fashion." More truly, the name is considered to be derived from the general designation of the fief or district in which the valley lies, *Porrois*—which, again, is supposed to be a corruption of *Porra* or *Borra*, meaning a marshy and woody hollow.

The valley of Port Royal presents to this day the same natural features which attracted the eye of the devout

solitary in the seventeenth century. Some years ago I paid a long-wished-for visit to it. It lies about eighteen miles west of Paris, and seven or eight from Versailles, on the road to Chevreuse. As the traveller approaches it from Versailles, the long lines of a level and somewhat dreary road, only relieved by rows of tall poplar-trees, break into a more picturesque country. An antique moulder-ing village, with quaint little church, its grey lichen-marked stones brightened by the warm sunshine of a September day, and the straggling vines drooping their pale dusty leaves over the cottage-doors, made a welcome variety in the monotonous landscape. How hazy yet cheerful was the brightness in which the poor mean houses seemed to sleep! After this the road swept down a long declivity, crowned on one side by an irregular out-line of wood, and presenting here and there broken and dilapidated traces of former habitations. The famous valley of Port Royal lay before us. It was a quiet and peaceful yet gloomy scene. The seclusion was perfect. No hum of cheerful industry enlivened the desolate space. An air rather as of long-continued neglect rested on ruined garden and terraces, on farmhouse and dovecot, and the remains as of a chapel nearer at hand. The more minutely the eye took in the scene, the more sad seemed its wasted recesses and the few monuments of its departed glories. The stillness as of a buried past lay all about, and it required an effort of imagination to people the valley with the sacred activities of the seven-teenth century.

A rough wooden enclosure has been erected on the site of the high altar surmounted by a cross. It con-tained a few memorials, amongst the most touching of

which were simple portraits of Arnauld, Le Maitre, De Saci, Quesnel, Nicole, Pascal, the Mère Angélique, the Mère Agnès, Jacqueline Pascal, and Dr Hamon the physician. Two portraits of the Mère Agnès particularly impressed me. The lines of the face were exquisitely touching in their gentle bravery and patience. As I looked at the noble and sweet countenances grouped on the bare unadorned walls, the sacred memories of the place rose vividly before my mind. It was here alone that the recluses from the neighbouring Grange met the sainted sisterhood, and mingled with them the prayers and tears of penitence. Otherwise they dwelt apart, each in diligent privacy, intent on their works of education or of charity. All the ruin and decay and somewhat dreary sadness of the scene could not weaken the life of thought and faith and hope and love that had once breathed there; and never before had I felt so deeply the enduring reality of the spiritual heroism and self-sacrifice, the glory of suffering and of goodness, that had made the spot so memorable.

The monastery was founded, not by Philip Augustus, but by Matthieu, first Lord of Marli, a younger son of the noble house of Montmorency. Having formed the design of accompanying the crusade proclaimed by Innocent III. to the Holy Land, he left at the disposal of his wife, Mathilde de Garlande, and his kinsman, the Bishop of Paris, a sum of money to devote to some pious work in his absence. They agreed to apply it to the erection of a monastery for nuns in this secluded valley, that had already acquired a reputation for sanctity in connection with the old chapel dedicated to St Lawrence, which attracted large numbers of worshippers. The founda-

tions of the church and monastery were laid in 1204. They were designed by the same architect who built the Cathedral of Amiens, and ere long the graceful and beautiful structures were seen rising in the wilderness. The nuns belonged to the Cistercian order. Their dress was white woollen, with a black veil; but afterwards they adopted as their distinctive badge a large scarlet cross on their white scapulary, as the symbol of the "Institute of the Holy Sacrament."

The abbey underwent the usual history of such institutions. Distinguished at first by the strictness of its discipline and the piety of its inmates, it became gradually corrupted with increasing wealth, till, in the end of the sixteenth century, it had grown notorious for gross and scandalous abuses. The revenues were squandered in luxury; the nuns did what they liked; and the extravagances and dissipations of the world were repeated amidst the solitudes which had been consecrated to devotion. But at length its revival arose out of one of the most obvious abuses connected with it. The patronage of the institution, like that of others, had been distributed without any regard to the fitness of the occupants, even to girls of immature age. In this manner the abbey of Port Royal accidentally fell to the lot of one who was destined by her ardent piety to breathe a new life into it, and by her indomitable and lofty genius to give it an undying reputation.

Jacqueline Marie Arnauld — better known by her official name, La Mère Angélique—was appointed abbess of Port Royal when she was only eight years of age. She was descended from a distinguished family belonging originally to the old *noblesse* of Provence, but

which had migrated to Auvergne and settled there. Of vigorous healthiness, both mental and physical, the Arnaulds had already acquired a merited position and name in the annals of France. In the beginning of the sixteenth century it found its way to Paris in the person of Antoine Arnauld, Seigneur de la Mothe, the grandfather of the heroine of Port Royal. M. de la Mothe, as he was commonly called, was endowed with the energetic will, and with more than the usual talents, of his family. He was specially known as Procureur-général to Catherine de Médicis; but, as he himself said, he wore "a soldier's coat as well as a lawyer's robe." He was a Huguenot, and nearly perished in the Bartholomew massacre. He had eight sons, every one of whom more or less achieved distinction in the service of their country; but his second son and namesake peculiarly inherited his father's legal talents, and became his successor in the office of Procureur-général. He more than rivalled his father's forensic success; and many traditions survive of his great eloquence, and of the pre-eminent ability with which he pleaded on behalf of the University of Paris for the expulsion of the Jesuits from France, under suspicion of having instigated an attempt on the life of Henri IV. in 1593. This great effort has been called the "original sin" of the Arnauld family against the Jesuit order, which was never forgiven. His eloquence produced such an impression, that it is said the judges rose in their seats to listen to his speech, while crowds assembled at the closed doors of the Court to catch its partial echoes. And yet, like some other great speeches, it cannot now be read without weariness.

Antoine Arnauld married the youthful daughter of M.

Marion, the Avocat-général, who became a mother while still only a girl of fifteen, but who grew into a noble and large-hearted woman, full of deeds of piety and charity. In all, the couple had twenty children, and felt, as may be imagined, the pressure of providing for so many. Out of this pressure came the remarkable lot of two of the daughters. The benefices of the Church were a fruitful field of provision, and the avocat-général, the maternal grandfather of the children, had large ecclesiastical influence. The result was the appointment not only of one daughter to the abbey of Port Royal, but also of a younger sister, Agnès, only six years of age, to the abbey of St Cyr, about six miles distant from Port Royal. Difficulties, not without reason, were found in obtaining the papal sanction to such appointments; but these were at last overcome by means, it is said, more creditable to M. Arnauld's ability than to his integrity.

At the age of eleven, in the year 1602, Angélique was installed Abbess of Port Royal. Her sister took the veil at the age of seven. United in the nursery, they had also spent some months together at the abbey of St Cyr, in preparation for their solemn office. They were of marked but very contrasted characters. The elder inherited the strong will and dominant energy of her race. As yet, and for some time afterwards, without any religious bias, she contemplated her prospects with a quiet and proud consciousness of responsibility. The younger sister was of a softer and more submissive nature. She shrank from her high position, saying that an abbess had to answer to God for the souls of her nuns, and she was sure that she would have enough to do to take care of her own. Angélique had no such

scruples. She was glad to be an abbess, and was resolved that her nuns would thoroughly do their duty. These sayings have been preserved in the memoirs of the family, and are supposed to indicate happily the firm, persistent spirit and legislative capacity of the one sister, in contrast with the passive rather than active strength, and milder yet no less enduring purpose, of the other.

The remarkable story of Angélique's conversion by the preaching of a Capucin friar in 1608, her strange contest with her parents which followed, the strengthening impulses in different directions which her religious life received, first from the famous St Francis de Sales, and finally, and especially, from the no less remarkable Abbé de St Cyran, all belong to the history of Port Royal, and cannot be detailed here. It is a touching and beautiful story, which can never lose its interest. It is only necessary that we draw attention to the temporary removal of the Abbess with her nuns to Paris in the year 1635, and to the settlement in the valley, during their absence from it, of the band of Solitaries whose piety and genius, no less than the heroic devotion of the sisterhood, have shed such a glory around it. It was the spiritual influence of St Cyran which overflowed in this direction. The religious genius of this remarkable man, of whom we shall speak more particularly in the next chapter, laid its spell upon the social life around him, and brought to his feet some of the most able and distinguished young men of the time. The elder brother of Angélique and Agnès Arnauld, known as M. d'Andilly, was amongst his devoted friends; and it was through him that St Cyran first became connected with Port Royal. D'Andilly was married, and a courtier—a busy man in the political

circles of his day; but he had long bowed before the force of St Cyran's religious convictions, and finally he too abandoned the world, and sought the retirement of Port Royal, whither three of his nephews had preceded him; and a younger and yet more distinguished brother, the namesake of his father, soon followed him. It was D'Andilly who said of St Cyran, "I was under such obligations to him that I loved him more than life." On the other hand, St Cyran said of him, "He has not the virtue of a saint or an anchorite, but I know no man of his condition who is so solidly virtuous."

The brotherhood of Port Royal had its beginning in 1637 with the conversion of two of the nephews of D'Andilly and the Mère Angélique, children of Arnauld's eldest daughter, who had married unhappily and been soon separated from her husband. These grandsons of Arnauld are known as M. le Maitre and M. de Sercourt, the former of whom, like his ancestors, had greatly distinguished himself at the bar. The latter was no less distinguished as a soldier. In the midst of worldly success, they forsook everything and gave themselves to a life of religious retirement, in which they were by-and-by joined by a younger and still more remarkable brother, known as M. de Saci, trained for the Church, and already mentioned in connection with Pascal's conversion. He became Pascal's spiritual director, and held with him the famous conversation on Epictetus and Montaigne. To the same group of men belonged Singlin, of whom we have heard so much in former pages, and Lancelot and Fontaine; above all, Antoine Arnauld, the youngest of the large Arnauld family, and the most indefatigable of them all. Singlin was a favourite of St

Cyran, and his successor in the office of spiritual director to the monastery, as De Saci was again the successor of Singlin in the same capacity. He was a man of less ability and knowledge than many of the others, the son of a wine merchant, who did not begin his religious studies till a comparatively late period, but of a very direct and simple character, and well skilled in the mysteries of the conscience, which made him a spiritual power in the community. He was withal of singular humility, and would fain have retired from the office of Confessor when St Cyran was set at liberty in 1643 after his long imprisonment; but neither then nor afterwards, on his illustrious friend's death, was he allowed to do so. St Cyran warned him that he could not fly from the duties of such a position without incurring the guilt of disobedience. De Saci seems to have been especially remarkable for his quiet self-possession and cautious insight into character. His brother, Le Maitre, brings out in a curious manner the contrast between his own impetuous character and the leisurely efficiency of De Saci's temper. As they sat at their evening meal—"a very modest collation"—

"He had hardly begun his supper when mine was already half digested. . . . Of quick and warm disposition, I had seen the end of my portion almost as soon as the beginning; it rapidly disappeared; and as I was thinking of rising from the table, I saw my brother De Saci, with his usual coolness and gravity, take a little piece of apple, peel it quietly, cut it leisurely, and eat it slowly. Then, after having finished, he rose almost as light as he had sat down, leaving untouched nearly all his very moderate portion. He went away as if he were quite satisfied, and even appeared to grow fat upon fasts."[1]

[1] Fontaine, vol. i. p. 354.

Claude Lancelot was the schoolmaster of the community, and represents to us perhaps more fully than any other name its famous system of education. Fontaine was one of its chief memoir writers, from whom we derive so much of our knowledge of the society; while the younger Arnauld, of whom we shall afterwards speak, Nicole, and the subject of our present sketch, represent its philosophical and literary activity.

Such was the company to which Pascal joined himself in 1655. They had been settled in divers places,—at first, in 1637, when they were still only a few disciples gathered around St Cyran, in the immediate neighbourhood of Port Royal de Paris; and then, when driven from this after their great head's imprisonment, for a short time at a place called Ferté Milon; and then, finally, in 1639, at Port Royal des Champs. Here they made a great change for the better by their assiduous industry. They drained the marshy valley, cleared it of its overgrowth of brushwood, and converted it into a comparatively smiling and salubrious abode. On the return of the sisterhood from Port Royal de Paris in 1648, the nuns found the place improved beyond their expectations. The conventual buildings had been repaired, and the church kept in good preservation. The bells of the church tower pealed a welcome; a large concourse of the neighbouring poor assembled in the courtyard to greet them; while the Solitaries — one of their number, a priest, bearing a cross — waited at the church door to enter with them, and swell with their voices the Te Deum with which they celebrated their return. After this they parted, a few of the brotherhood repairing to a house which had been taken for them in Paris,

but others retiring to the well-known farm on the hill known as Les Granges. There was, of course, the strictest seclusion maintained in the nunnery, as before, and the inmates of Les Granges were wellnigh as completely severed from it as the brethren who retired to Paris.

The mode of life of the Solitaries was simple in the highest degree. They wore no distinctive dress. Their wants were supplied by the barest necessaries in the shape of lodging and furniture. From early morning, three A.M., to night, they were occupied in works of piety, charity, or industry. They met in the chapel after their private devotions to say matins and lauds, a service which occupied about an hour and a half, after which they kissed the earth in token of a common lowliness, and sought each his own room for a time. The round of devotion thus commenced was continued with a steady uniformity, — Prime at half-past six; Tierces at nine, and after this a daily Mass; Sexte at eleven; Nones at two; Vespers at four; and Compline closing the series at a quarter-past seven.[1] The Gospel and Epistles were read daily; and sometimes during or after dinner the Lives of the Saints. They dined together; and a walk thereafter formed the sole recreation of the day. Two hours in the morning, and two in the afternoon, were devoted to work in the fields or in the garden by those who were able for such tasks. Confession and communion were frequent, but no uniform rule was enforced. In this, as in fasting and austerities generally, each recluse was left to his own free will; and, as will be seen in Pascal's case,

[1] See Beard's Port Royal, vol. i. pp. 207, 208.

there was no need to stimulate the morbid desire for bodily mortification.

It was in the last month of 1654 that Pascal's final conversion and adhesion to Port Royal took place. His mind for some time before had been greatly agitated, as already explained—filled with disgust of the world and all its enjoyments. Then had come the accident at the Bridge of Neuilly, and about the same time, or a little later, a remarkable vision or ecstasy which he has himself described, and which has given rise to a good deal of useless speculation. During life he never spoke of this matter, unless it may have been to his confessor;[1] but after his death two copies of a brief writing were found upon him,—the one written on parchment enclosing the other written on paper, and carefully stitched into the clothes that he had worn day by day. It is beyond question that Pascal must have been deeply touched by the event, whatever may have been its precise nature, the memorial of which he had thus preserved. The footnote shows the writing in the original, as printed by M. Faugère: there are some variations in the copies, but it seems most correctly given as below. It may be translated as follows:—

✠

The year of grace 1654.

Monday 23d November, day of St Clement, pope and martyr, and others in the martyrology.

Vigil of St Chrysogone, martyr and others.

From about half-past ten o'clock in the evening till about half-past twelve.

[1] Recueil d'Utrecht, quoted by Maynard, vol. i. p. 78.

Fire.

God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob,
Not of philosophers and of savants.
Certitude. Certitude. Sentiment. Joy. Peace.
God of Jesus Christ
My God and your God.
Thy God will be my God—
Oblivion of the world and of all save God.
He is found only by the ways taught in the Gospel.

Grandeur of the human soul.

Just Father, the world hath not known Thee, but I have known Thee.

Joy, joy, joy, tears of joy.

I am separated from Him———
They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living water.
My God, will you forsake me?———
Oh, may I not be separated from Him eternally!

This is life eternal, that they know Thee the only true God, and Him whom Thou hast sent, J.-C.

Jesus Christ———
Jesus Christ———

I am separated from Him; I have fled, renounced, crucified Him.
Oh that I may never be separated from Him!
He is only held fast by the ways taught in the Gospel.

Renunciation total and sweet,
etc.[1]

✠

[1] L'an de grâce 1654.

Lundi 23 novembre, jour de St Clément, pape et martyr, et autres au martyrologe.

Veille de St Chrysogone, martyr et autres.

Depuis environ dix heures et demie du soir jusques environ minuit et demi.

It is difficult to make much of this document. Are we to suppose that Pascal, on the 23d of November 1654, thought he saw a vision, revealing to him the truth of Christianity, and the vanity of philosophy and the world? Even if Pascal did this, our estimate of the matter could hardly be much affected. But there is no evidence that he himself attached a supernatural character to the incident. He felt, no doubt, that a real revelation had come to him, that his mind had been lifted in spiritual ecstasy

Feu.

Dieu d'Abraham, Dieu d'Isaac, Dieu de Jacob,
Non des philosophes et de savants.
Certitude. Certitude. Sentiment. Joie. Paix.[1]
Dieu de Jésus-Christ
Deum meum et Deum vestrum.
Ton Dieu sera mon Dieu—
Oubli du monde et de tout hormis Dieu.
Il ne se trouve que par les voies enseignées dans l'Evangile.

Grandeur de l'âme humaine.

Père juste, le monde ne t'a point connu, mais je t'ai connu.

Joie, joie, joie, pleurs de joie.

Je m'en suis séparé———
Dereliquerunt me fontem aquæ vivæ.
Mon Dieu me quitterez-vous?———
Que je n'en sois pas séparé éternellement!

Cette est la vie éternelle qu'ils te connaissent seul vrai Dieu et celui que tu as envoyé, J.-C.

Jésus Christ———
Jésus Christ———
Je m'en suis séparé; je l'ai fui, renoncé, crucifié.
Que je n'en sois jamais séparé!
Il ne se conserve que par les voies enseignées dans l'Evangile.

Renonciation totale et douce,
etc.

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[1] In the parchment copy, "Certitude, joie, certitude, sentiment, vue, joie."

away from the love of all that for a time had hid from him the presence of God and of a higher world. The moment of this blessed experience had been sacred to him. He had tried to trace it in these broken characters, and in seasons of doubt or depression he may have sought to awaken a new fervour of faith and love by their contemplation. This seems all the natural meaning of the incident; but, as some have endeavoured to attach to it a supernatural importance, so others, in whom the idea not only of the supernatural but of the spiritual only excites contempt, have tried to give to it a purely superstitious character. It was Condorcet who first applied to the paper the epithet of Pascal's "Amulette;" and Lélut has adopted the epithet, and written a volume more or less relating to it. He supposes the vision to have occurred to Pascal on the evening of the day when the event at Neuilly had upset his nervous system—always easily disturbed—and brought before him a frightful picture of his alienation from God, and the piety of his early manhood. Facts mingled with the dreams of his excited imagination. He saw the horses plunging over the precipice, and an abyss seemed to open beside him—the abyss of eternity; when, lo! from the depths of the abyss there appeared a globe of fire (*un globe de feu*) encircled with the Cross; and the irresistible impulse was stirred in him to throw aside the world for ever, and embrace God,—"Not the God of philosophers or of savants," but "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob—the God of Jesus Christ," from whom he had been severed, but from whom he felt he never more would be severed; abiding in Him in "sweet and total renunciation" of all else. The idea, of course, is that

Pascal's dream or vision was the result of physical derangement; and it may be safely granted that if the reality at all corresponded to Lélut's imaginary picture, this is its natural explanation. The story of the "vision" and the "abyss" are thus made, not without a certain appearance of probability, to fit into one another, and both into the accident at Neuilly; and a certain congruity of external and internal alarm is hence given to the great crisis of Pascal's life. Unhappily, however, there is a lack of evidence regarding the accident itself,[1] and, still more, the accompanying story of the abyss seen by Pascal at his side, which must make the reader cautious who has no theory to support. Voltaire, in his usual manner, made the most of Pascal's supposed delusions. "In the last years of his life," he said, "Pascal believed that he had seen an abyss *by the side of his chair*,—need we on that account have the same fancy? I, too, see an abyss, but it is in the very things which he believed that he had explained." He quotes also the authority of Leibnitz for the statement that Pascal's melancholy had led his intellect astray—a result, he adds, not at all wonderful in the case of a man of such delicate temperament and gloomy imagination. But Voltaire was not precise here, as in other matters about Pascal. He understood him too little to be a good judge of his mental peculiarities. All that Leibnitz really said was, that Pascal, "in

[1] The evidence of an anonymous MS. in the collection of P. Guerrier, grandnephew of Pascal, in which the story is told on the authority of two friends of the Pascal family, M. Arnoul de St Victor and M. le Pierre de Barillon. The evidence for the story of the abyss is not even contemporaneous. It comes from an Abbé Boileau, unconnected with the poet of that name, who first told it in a volume of letters published in 1737.

wishing to fathom the depths of religion, had become scrupulous even to folly."[1]

Whatever explanation we may give of the supposed incidents attending Pascal's conversion, there never was a more absurd fancy than that Pascal's mind suffered any eclipse in the great change that came to him. He may have been credulous, he may have been superstitious. The miracle of the Holy Thorn may be an evidence of the one, and the unnatural asceticism of his later years a proof of the other. But to speak of the author of the 'Provincial Letters,' of the problems on the Cycloid, and finally of the 'Pensées,' as if his intellect had suffered from his conversion, is to use words without meaning. All his noblest writings were the product of his religious experience, and he never soared so high in intellectual and literary achievement as when moving on the wings of spiritual indignation or of spiritual aspiration.

The whole interest of Pascal's life from this period is concentrated in his writings—first the 'Provincials,' and then the 'Pensées,' to which we devote separate chapters. There was only the interval of a year between his conversion and the commencement of his great controversy, and little is known of how he passed his time during this interval. He seems to have remained chiefly at Port Royal under the guidance of M. de Saci, and to have felt an unwonted measure of happiness in his triumph over the world and in the possession of his own quiet thoughts. We have seen how he spoke of being treated "like a prince," and even his health seemed to improve, notwithstanding the regularity and severity of

[1] Leibnitziana, quoted by Sainte-Beuve, t. iii. p. 286.

his religious devotions. He communicated his feelings of elation to his sister, who replied (19th January 1655) that she was delighted to find him "gay in his solitude," as she never was at his happiness in the world. "Notwithstanding," she adds, "I do not know how M. de Saci adapts himself to so light-hearted a penitent, who professes to find compensation for the vain joys and amusements of the world in joys somewhat more reasonable, and *jeux d'esprit* more allowable, instead of expiating them by perpetual tears."

How long Pascal's pious elation continued is not said, nor have we any further details of his religious life at Port Royal. He never absolutely took up his abode there as one of the Solitaries, and could therefore say in his sixteenth Provincial Letter, without more than an innocent equivocation, that he "did not belong to Port Royal." He was still found there, however, in the beginning of the following year (1655), when the affair of M. Arnauld and the Sorbonne was approaching its crisis, and the idea of his famous letters was started in a meeting, to be afterwards mentioned, between him and Arnauld and Nicole. After this, during the publication of the 'Letters,' Pascal seems chiefly to have resided in Paris, probably with a view to the greater facilities he enjoyed there in prosecuting his assaults upon the Jesuits, which continued till the spring of 1657. During the following year he was busy with the great idea of a work in defence of religion, suggested partly by his own intellectual activity, but partly also by a special incident at Port Royal which made a great impression upon him.

This was the famous "miracle" of the Holy Thorn. Madame Périer's daughter, Marguerite Périer—the same

to whom we are indebted for interesting memorials of her uncle's life—had become, with her sister, a pupil at Port Royal. She suffered from an apparently incurable disease of the eye, *fistula lachrymalis*. On a sudden she was reported to be entirely cured, and the cure was attributed to the touch of a relic which had been brought to the abbey by a priest,—a supposed thorn from the crown of Christ. It is remarkable that the Mère Angélique was somewhat slow of belief as to the "miracle," and that she marvelled the world should make so much of it. But it secured the credence of Pascal, and became a great fact in the history of Port Royal, staying for a time the hand of persecution, and pointing, as its friends believed, to the visible interposition of heaven. How could the accusations against Port Royal be true, seeing what God Himself had done on its behalf? "This place, which men say is the devil's temple, God makes His house. Men declare that its children must be taken out of it, and God heals them there. They are threatened with all the furies; God loads them with His favours." This was Pascal's own language on the subject,[1] and there can be no doubt that the supposed miracle deeply affected him. He was "sensibly touched," it is said, "by such a grace, regarding it as virtually done to himself, seeing it was done to one so near to him in kindred, and who was his spiritual daughter in baptism." He was penetrated by a great joy, and much occupied by the thought of what had happened, and the general subject of miracles. There was in this manner awakened in him "the extreme desire of employing himself on a work in refutation of the principles and false

[1] Pensées, t. ii. p. 76, 2d ed., Havet.

reasonings of the atheists. "He had studied them," his sister continues, "with great care, and applied his whole mind to search out the means of convincing them. His last year of work was entirely occupied in collecting divers thoughts on this subject."

Unhappily, in the course of 1658 Pascal's old illness returned with redoubled severity, and the last four years of his life became in consequence years of great languor and interruption of his projected work. The practice of continuous composition failed him. Hitherto he had been wont to develop his thoughts completely,—to write them out, as it were, mentally before committing them to paper; but now he began the habit of transferring his ideas rapidly, and sometimes imperfectly, to manuscript, as they arose in his mind. In many cases, if not in all, these first sketches remained as originally made, without any revision or further reconstruction; and from the mass of papers accumulated in this manner during these years the 'Pensées' were formed—the story of whose publication will be afterwards told. Strangely, it was in this very year, during a fit of severe toothache, apparently connected with his general illness, that Pascal began his wonderful series of problems on the cycloid, showing how fresh and unimpaired his scientific genius remained under all the changes of his health and of his main intellectual interests.

The last years of Pascal's life, in their deep suffering, and in their many traits of pious resignation and self-denial, have been fully sketched by Madame Périer. We do not think it necessary to repeat the sketch here, touching and beautiful as in some respects it is. It is impossible to read her simple and earnest narrative

without emotion, and yet the emotion is apt to evaporate in translation. It is impossible, also, to avoid the feeling that, with all the tenderness and humility of Pascal's later years, there mingle a strange pride in his very austerities, and something of the nature of religious mania, which, beautiful as may be the forms it sometimes takes, is yet in its spirit, and in not a few of its excesses, essentially unlovely. Pascal's care of the poor, his love of them—"to serve the poor in a spirit of poverty" was what appeared to him "most agreeable to God"—his wish to die among them, to be carried to the Hospital for Incurables, and breathe his last there; the story of his rescue of the poor girl who asked alms from him on the streets; his unparalleled patience, and even gladness, in suffering, so that he seemed to welcome it and bind it about him as a garment; his wonderful humility and yet his noble courage at the last in the matter of the Formulary,—all this goes to the heart of the reader. It must be a cold heart that is not moved by the picture of a great soul striving "to renounce all pleasure and all superfluities,"—to copy literally, like St Francis, the portrait of his Master. But here, as everywhere, the human copy falls infinitely short of the divine Original. There is the loveliness of a true human life beneath all the picture of suffering presented to us in the Gospels. All the hues of natural feeling have gone out of the last years of Pascal. He not only bore suffering—he preferred it; and he boldly justified his preference. "Sickness," he said, "is the natural state of the Christian; it puts us in the condition in which we always ought to be." In this spirit he strove to deaden any sensation of pleasure in his food, in the attentions of his relatives and

friends, even in his studies. He could not bear to see his sister caressing her children; there seemed to him harm in even saying that a woman was beautiful; the married state was a "kind of homicide or rather Deicide." He thought it wrong that any one should find pleasure in attachment to him, for he "was not the final object of any being, and had not wherewith to satisfy any" So jealous was he of any surprise of pleasure, of any thought of vanity or complacency in himself and his work, that he wore a girdle of iron next his skin, the sharp points of which he pressed closely when he thought himself in any danger, especially in such moments of intercourse with the world as he still sometimes allowed himself.

Such details are neither interesting in themselves nor do they present Pascal in his highest character. One cannot help feeling that, touching as Madame Périer's narrative is, there must have been, even in the Pascal of later years, more than she has drawn for us. One glimpse we get, but not in her pages, of a more natural temper, when he withstood his Jansenist friends in the matter of subscribing the Formulary demanded from the Port Royalists. He had himself previously been willing to subscribe, with certain restrictions, when his sister Jacqueline alone stood out in her resistance to what she deemed a treasonable betrayal of the cause. She signed at last, but against her conscience, and, so to speak, with her blood. She died immediately afterwards, the first victim of the signature, as she has been called, and bequeathing a letter to her fellow-sufferers on the subject. Whether inspired by her words or not, Pascal took a firm stand against any further concessions, and in a famous

interview with Arnauld, Nicole, and Sainte-Marthe, he argued the point with such strength and vehemence that he fell fainting to the ground.[1]

This was in the end of 1661, when his sufferings were fast drawing to a close. In the previous summer, when at Clermont, he had written to Fermat that he was so weak as to be "unable to walk without a stick, or to hold himself on horseback." His weakness had grown apace, and in June 1662 he was seized with his last illness. It was necessary that his sister should nurse him, and this could only be done by his removal to her house, for he had given up his own house to a poor family, one of whose children had taken smallpox, and he would neither allow the child to be removed nor his sister to run the risk of carrying infection to her children. He left his own home for hers, therefore, on the 27th of June, and never returned. Three days after his removal he was seized with a violent colic, which deprived him of all sleep. His physicians at first were not alarmed, as his pulse continued good, but gradually pain and sleeplessness wore him out. He confessed both to the *curé* of the parish and to his friend Sainte-Marthe, one of the directors of the community. He wished, as we said, to die in the Hospital for Incurables amongst the poor, but in his state of weakness it was impossible to gratify this wish. After the administration of the last sacrament, which he received with tearful emotion, he thanked the *curé*, and exclaimed, "May God never leave me!" These were his last words. Convulsions having returned, he expired on the 19th of August 1662.

[1] Recueil d'Utrecht, Maynard, vol. i. p. 555.

It is unnecessary to attempt any estimate of Pascal's character. The reader must draw it for himself in the light of these pages. With all enthusiasm for its grandeur and unity of purpose, and that moral and intellectual elevation which it everywhere shows, it may be found lacking in breadth and variety, and that familiar interest and charm which strangely often come from the contemplation of human weakness rather than of human strength. There is certainly less to love in him than to admire—less to call forth delight than respect. The play of natural individuality is hidden behind lines of lofty distance, and latterly of Jansenist severity. A proud, ascetic, and worn figure seems to rise before us; but strangely Pascal's portrait, as known to us, conveys no idea of asceticism. The face is full-fleshed and expressive, like the face of a child, with large ripe lips and open eyes of wonder,—a portrait which suggests the companion of the Duc de Roannez in his years of pleasure, rather than the weary and pain-worn penitent of Port Royal.[1]

[1] The most authentic portrait of Pascal is probably that prefixed by M. Faugère to his edition of the 'Penseés.' The sketch, in red chalk, was found amongst the papers of M. Domat, an eminent advocate, and one of Pascal's well-known friends. It bears below an inscription by Domat's son—"Portrait de M. Pascal fait par mon père"—and is supposed to represent him in his earlier years, when he studied natural philosophy along with his friend.

CHAPTER V.

THE 'PROVINCIAL LETTERS.'

PASCAL'S 'Letters to a Provincial' represent a great controversy, the nature of which it is necessary to explain. They are, at the same time, the most perfect expression of his literary genius, and touch theological questions with such an inimitable grace and felicity of expression as to have awakened a universal intellectual interest. It may be hard to justify this interest by any analysis of their contents, or by such extracts as can be given from them. No English can convey the exquisite fitness of French polemical expression in its highest form, its mingled force and delicacy, its keenness and yet its lightness. We shall, however, endeavour to give as clearly as we can an account, first, of the controversy out of which the 'Letters' originated, and then of the consummate skill with which Pascal conducted it.

M. de St Cyran is not merely one of the chief figures connected with Port Royal: he was the fountain-head of its special power. To his influence and teaching it was indebted for its chief glory and its most terrible sufferings. Jean Baptist du Vergier d'Hauranne, better known by the above official designation, was of noble

family. He was born at Bayonne in 1581, and early devoted himself to the study of theology at Louvain and Paris. While a student, he is supposed to have first made the acquaintance of Cornelius Jansen, and to have begun with him that co-operation which was destined to bear such remarkable fruits. Their intimacy was one based on spiritual affinity and a common enthusiasm. For Jansen was the son of poor peasants, without even a surname. His father is only known as Jan Ottosen, or John the son of Otto; as the son in his turn was Cornelius Jansen, or the son of John. Jansen was the younger of the two friends, having been born in 1585; but he appears to have exercised a powerful influence over his older companion. The great bond of their union and common enthusiasm was the study of St Augustine. For the purpose of pursuing this study undisturbed, they retired to the seaside near Bayonne, and here they established themselves in scholastic seclusion. Smitten with the desire of attaining theological truth, they found the Schoolmen constantly appealing to St Augustine as their authority, and they consequently resolved to examine this authority for themselves, and so ascend to what they believed to be the source of their favourite science. Had they taken only one step further, they would have approached Protestantism; and as it was, the favourite charge which the Jesuits afterwards made against them was, that they were Calvinists in disguise. Unconsciously they were so, notwithstanding all their disclaimers. The Jesuits were unscrupulous; but their penetration here, as in many other cases, was not at fault. The doctrines so warmly espoused by Jansen and St Cyran were the old doctrines of *grace*, which Calvin

and they alike borrowed from St Augustine, and he in his turn found in the Epistles of St Paul.[1] And the controversy which their labours were destined once more to awaken in the bosom of the Catholic Church was nothing else than the old dispute which, since the days of Augustine and Pelagius, had more than once already agitated it.

The fellow-students continued their studies near Bayonne for five years. So closely did they work, that Jansen is said to have spent days and nights in the same chair, snatching only brief intervals of rest. A game at battledore and shuttlecock occasionally relieved their vigils; but no serious employment divided their attention with the arduous task upon which they had entered, of mastering and digesting the principles of the Augustinian theology. The Bishop of Bayonne offered preferment to D'Hauranne, and there were projects of settling Jansen also at the head of a college; but it was not till some time afterwards that either of them entered upon official labours. They were left during those years to the uninterrupted studies which subsequently resulted in the great work of Jansen. The system of theological thought associated with his name was then definitely matured.

It is beyond our province to sketch the career of these fellow-students, one of whom became the chief spiritual director of Port Royal, and the other its great theological

[1] The following genealogy, from a Jesuit source, represents not unfairly the origin of Jansenism and Port Royalism as a theological system: "Paulus genuit Augustinum; Augustinus Calvinum; Calvinus Jansenium; Jansenius Sancyranum; Sancyranus Arnaldum et fratres ejus." The sequel will show how earnestly Pascal disclaims Calvinism.

centre. The abbey of St Cyran was the only preferment which D'Hauranne ever accepted, notwithstanding Richelieu's repeated offers of a bishopric. He was content to exercise from his monastic seclusion an influence far more powerful than that of any bishop of his day. And so penetrating and dangerous did this influence seem to the great Minister whose efforts to bind him to his side had so often failed, that he at length shut him up in Vincennes (May 1638). Here he remained in close confinement for more than four years; but even from this gloomy retreat the impression of his great personal power was spread abroad, and felt in many quarters as steadily as before. He survived his release only a few months. His long imprisonment had broken down his health; and although the enthusiasm of his spirit was strong as ever, his weakened body was no longer able to answer to its demands. He could hardly "hold himself up," and a slight attack of illness carried him off.

St Cyran's chief strength seems to have lain in a concentrated enthusiasm and quiet strength of will which enabled him to hold his own against all opposition, and to subdue other minds larger than his own to his purposes. When the Prince de Condé interceded for him after his arrest, Richelieu's reply was: "Do you know of whom you are speaking? That man is more dangerous than six armies. *I* say that attrition with confession is necessary: *he* believes that contrition is necessary.[1] And in the affair of Monsieur's marriage all France has given way to me, and he alone has the hardihood to

[1] "Attrition" is a scholastic term for the first acute emotions of the grace of repentance. "Contrition" denotes the grace in a more advanced stage of development.

oppose it." Against all enticements and assaults alike he set a proud and firm faith in his own mission — a patience sublime in its calmness, and in the unwavering consciousness of Divine right on his side. "I am careful to complain of nothing," he said in his imprisonment. "I am ready to remain here a hundred years; to die here, if God will. I am ready for whatever He designs—for action or for suffering." The same faith and quiet assurance gave him his marvellous influence over others, and that fascination which made him a power in the cultivated society of Paris. All the Arnauld family more or less owned his influence; and it was his teaching mainly that peopled Port Royal with the Solitaries who have made it so illustrious.

The life and work of Jansen seem at first far removed from Port Royal. He returned to Louvain after his sojourn at Bayonne, and became a professor of theology in its famous university, on whose behalf he was employed in several political negotiations with the Spanish Court. Finally he was appointed Bishop of Ypres, in which capacity he is chiefly known in the ecclesiastical world. His fame, however, rests not on any political or ecclesiastical labours, but on the results flowing from his original studies at Bayonne. He never forgot his devotion to St Augustine. He is said to have read the whole of his writings ten times, and the treatises against the Pelagians not less than thirty times. The fruit of all this studious devotion was his work known briefly as the 'Augustinus,'[1] published two years after

[1] The full title is, "Cornelii Jansenii Episcopi Iprensis Augustinus: seu doctrina S. Augustini de humanæ naturæ sanitate, ægritudine, medicinâ, adversus Pelagianos et Massilienses."

his death (in 1640). Nothing could have seemed more innocent or laudable than the attempt by a bishop of the Church to set forth the doctrine of St Augustine. The book professed to have been undertaken in a humble spirit.

"I have avoided error where I could," says the author; "for the cases in which I could not, I implore the reader's pardon. . . . Let the knowledge of my sincerity make amends for the simplicity of my error. I know that if I have erred, it is not in the assertion of Catholic truth, but in the statement of the opinion of St Augustine; for I have not laid down what is true or false, what is to be held or rejected according to the faith of the Catholic Church, but only what Augustine taught and declared was to be held."

A task of such a character, carried out in such a spirit, might have seemed a harmless one.

But the Jesuits had long marked both St Cyran and Jansen as theological foes, opposed to their special doctrines. They endeavoured therefore, first of all, to prevent the publication of Jansen's work; and failing in this, they directed all their efforts to procure a condemnation of the book from the Court of Rome. "Never," it has been said, "did any book receive a more stormy welcome. Within a few weeks of its appearance the University, the Jesuits, the executors of Jansen, the printer of the 'Augustinus,' the Spanish governor of the Low Countries, and the Papal Nuncio were engaged in a warfare of pamphlets, treatises, pasquinades, pleadings, synods, audiences, which it would be impossible to set forth in historical sequence."[1] In the midst of all this, Jansen's old fellow-student received the book, in the

[1] Beard's Port Royal, vol. i. p. 243.

preparation of which he also had had some share, in his prison at Vincennes, as if an echo of his own thoughts. "It would last as long as the Church," he said. "After St Paul and St Augustine, no one had written concerning grace like Jansen."

The Jesuits were resolved in their hostility. They knew that the book, while assuming a historical form, and professing in the main to represent the doctrine of Augustine as directed against the errorists of his own time, had a side reference to the "opinions of certain modern authors," understood to be well-known theologians of their own school. This was in fact acknowledged in an appendix. Unable any longer to wreak their vengeance on the author himself, they were resolved to put his work under ban; and accordingly, a Bull was obtained from Rome in the summer of 1642, condemning Jansen by name, and declaring that the 'Augustinus' contained "many propositions already condemned" by the Holy See. It was doubted whether the Pope, Urban VIII., designed to go the length announced in the bull, and the terms of the condemnation were rumoured to have been inserted by a Papal officer in the interests of the Jesuits. The Universities of Louvain and Paris therefore did not take any steps to carry out the condemnation. They remained spectators of the controversy which raged around them, in which the Archbishop of Paris on one side, and the youngest of the Arnauld family on the other, were conspicuous.

Antoine Arnauld was the last of the twenty children born to the great parliamentary orator and Catherine Marion his wife, of whom we have already spoken. His nephews, Le Maitre and De Saci, were so near his own

age, that they were accustomed to call him familiarly *le petit oncle*. Early consecrated to theological studies by the influence of St Cyran and his mother, he espoused zealously the Augustinian doctrines. A splendid prospect seemed opening before him, had he chosen to enter the Church and pursue an ecclesiastical career in the ordinary manner. But while thirsting for theological distinction, he had scruples about his vocation to the holy office. He overcame his scruples so far as to become a priest; but not only would he not accept the benefices placed within his reach by powerful friends—he insisted on resigning such as he held. He even disposed of his patrimony for the benefit of Port Royal, preserving only as much as would provide him with the bare necessaries of life. He became a doctor in 1641, and already, in 1643, the interest of the whole theological world was aroused by his treatise, 'Of Frequent Communion.'

The aim of this treatise, as of all Arnauld's writings, was anti-Jesuitical. He set forth, backed by the authority of "Fathers, Popes, and Councils," the necessity of spiritual preparation for the Holy Communion, in opposition to the formula which had been boldly advanced by more than one Jesuit teacher, that "the more we are devoid of divine grace, the more ought we to seek Jesus Christ in the Eucharist." The commotion made by the publication shows how grave was the need for it. On the one hand it was warmly welcomed, many pious bishops and doctors testifying approbation of its contents; on the other hand it was violently assailed. The Jesuit pulpits resounded with abuse of it and of its author. All Paris was disturbed by the noise which it made. "There

must be a snake in the grass somewhere," it was wittily remarked, "for the Jesuits were never so excited when only the glory of God was at stake." The learned Petavius, and even the Prince de Condé, did not disdain to mingle in the combat. For a time Arnauld seemed to triumph, but finally the influence of Rome was brought against him, and he was glad to take refuge in concealment—the first of the many concealments into which his incessant polemical activity drove him in the course of his long life. He never abated his opposition. He had no sooner retired from one controversy, than he reappeared in some other. His energy knew no bounds, his love of fighting no pause. When in his old age his friend and fellow-student Nicole advised him to rest, "Rest!" he said; "have I not all eternity to rest in?"

It was a matter of course that when the great Jansenist controversy began, Arnauld should be found in the van of it. 'An Apology for Jansen' appeared from his pen in 1644, and a second "Apology" in the following year. It seemed for a time as if the Jesuits would be foiled in their efforts to secure the effectual condemnation of the book. But at length one of their number, Nicolas Cornet, Syndic of the Faculty of Theology at Paris, collected its essential heresy in the shape of seven propositions. These propositions were afterwards reduced to five; and at length, on the 31st of May 1653, a formal condemnation of them was obtained from the Court of Rome. There was no longer any doubt as to the attitude of the Holy See. All the propositions were declared to be distinctly heretical, and the first and the fifth, moreover, to be blasphemous and impious. This result was not reached without much debate and

delay. No sooner had Cornet's propositions appeared than Arnauld assailed them and all who supported them. A congregation of four cardinals and eleven theological assessors had been appointed to examine them in the end of the year 1651, They had taken, therefore, a year and a half to their work, and the sentence at length issued was intended to bring the long warfare to a close. In point of fact it kindled a fresh fire, and opened, if not a larger, yet a more vital controversy. Arnauld retired willingly before a new writer summoned by himself into the field, and girded with his blessing as he went forth to the encounter.

The five propositions, which were professed to be extracted from Jansen's book, and as such were condemned by the Papal Bull of 31st May 1653, are so intimately connected with the 'Provincial Letters' as to claim a place in our pages. They are as follows:—

I. There are divine commandments which good men, although willing, are unable to obey; and the grace by which these commandments are possible is also wanting in them.

II. No person, in the state of fallen nature, is able to resist internal grace.

III. In order to render human actions meritorious or otherwise, liberty from necessity is not required, but only liberty from constraint.

IV. The semi-Pelagians, while admitting the necessity of prevenient grace — or grace preceding all actions — were heretics, inasmuch as they said that this grace was such as man could, according to his will, either resist or obey.

V. The semi-Pelagians also erred in saying that Christ died or shed His blood for all men universally.

It would be needless for us to touch these propositions, even by way of explanation. We have endeavoured to state them from the original Latin as clearly as we can, so that they may bear some definite meaning even to the non-theological reader. But their very statement bristles with controversy, and the half-extinct meanings of old questions that go to the root of Christian thought lie hid in their language. All the propositions were condemned without reserve, but two points were left unsettled. It was not asserted that the propositions were to be found in the 'Augustinus,' and that they were condemned in the sense in which Jansen held them, and in no other. The course of the controversy and the fate of Port Royal in the end mainly turned upon these points.

The Papal Bull condemning the five propositions was speedily published in France, and the triumph of the Jesuits was undisguised. A great blow had been struck, and for a time all seemed inclined to bow before it. Political reasons combined with others to give effect to the Papal verdict. Cardinal Mazarin, in possession of the favour of the Queen-mother, had imprisoned his enemy, Cardinal de Retz, who had so long waged in the intrigues and wars of the Fronde a restless conflict with them; and as the latter in his prosperity had shown a certain favour for Port Royal, this was enough to stimulate, on the part of Mazarin, an interest on behalf of the Jesuits. Yet he was reluctant to move actively against the Jansenists. M. d'Andilly still had his ear in matters of State, and by his intervention and that of others the project of an armistice was for a time entertained. Port Royal was to keep silence, if its enemies did not push their triumph to an

extremity. Even the indefatigable Arnauld seems to have promised to be quiet. But the Jesuits were too conscious of their power, and too relentless in their hostility, to pause in their determination to crush their opponents. They had recourse both to gibes and to active persecution. They printed an almanac with the figure of Jansen as frontispiece, flying in the guise of a winged devil before the Pope and the king into the arms of the Huguenots. They assailed the Duc de Liancourt, and refused him absolution in his own parish church, for no other reason but that he was on friendly relations with Port Royal, and would not withdraw, at their demand, his granddaughter from its protection. This affair, which appears to have been deliberately planned, caused a great sensation, and became, strangely, the indirect occasion of the 'Provincial Letters.'

Indignant at such an outrage, Arnauld was no longer to be restrained. He rushed before the public with a pamphlet under the title, "Letter of a Doctor of the Sorbonne to a Person of Condition, concerning an event which has recently happened in a parish of Paris to a Nobleman of the Court, February 24, 1655." The Letter opened with an expression of his wish to dispute no more; but as Sainte-Beuve hints, the avowed desire of peace plunged him all the more into war. His letter called forth numerous replies. He responded by a "Second Letter," in the shape of a volume. In this letter his enemies seemed to see his fate written. They extracted from it two propositions which in their view clearly contravened the Papal verdict—namely, 1st, that he had expressed doubts whether the five propositions condemned as heretical were in Jansen's book at all; and 2d, that

he had really reproduced the first of the five condemned propositions in one of his own statements, that according to both the Gospel and the Fathers, St Peter, a just man, was wanting in grace when he fell. This was nothing but undisguised Jansenism, and his accusers in the Sorbonne rallied for his overthrow. A meeting was summoned to consider the letter, and to judge it and the author.

The details of the proceedings would weary the reader. It is sufficient to say that, notwithstanding the concessions wrung from Arnauld, some of which were humiliating enough, he was condemned on the first point (Jan. 1656)—the great question of "fait," in contrast to the question of "droit," involved in the second statement as to grace being wanting to St Peter in his fall. His condemnation, however, was mainly secured by the introduction of a number of monks who swelled the majority against him, and the legality of whose vote was challenged by many members. But, as Pascal afterwards said, "it was easier to find monks than arguments." The second and doctrinal point received professedly more deliberate discussion. The sittings regarding it were protracted till the close of the month, the 29th of January. But the result was really forestalled. The restriction laid on free debate was such as to lead no fewer than sixty doctors to withdraw, protesting to Parliament against the interference with their rights. Their protest, however, came to nothing. Sentence was finally passed, against not only Arnauld, but all who adhered to him or espoused his opinions. The victim, with his usual adroitness, escaped his pursuers, and went once more into a concealment which all their vigilance could not penetrate. Two days after the censure he wrote to one of his nieces, "I am

in very close hiding, and by God's grace without trouble or disquiet." "Would you like me to tell you where M. Arnauld is hidden?" inquired a lady of the *gendarmes* who were searching her house for traces of him. "He is safely hidden here," pointing to her heart; "arrest him if you can."

It was in the interval betwixt the first and second judgment of the Sorbonne that the first of the 'Provincial Letters' appeared. The story is,[1] that during the course of the process Arnauld, Nicole, and Pascal, along with M. Vitart, the steward of the Duc de Luynes (to whom Arnauld's second Letter had been addressed), and other friends, were met in secrecy at Port Royal des Champs. Their conversation turned to the pending case, and the misapprehensions and prejudices which prevailed in the public mind regarding it. It was felt that some effort should be made to clear away these prejudices, and to diffuse right information in a popular form. Arnauld, ever ready with his pen, was prepared himself to undertake this task; and in a few days afterwards he read to his friends a long and serious paper in vindication of his position. But his friends were not moved as he expected. His pen, powerful in its own sphere, was not fitted to tell upon the popular mind; and his audience were too honest to conceal their disappointment. Arnauld, in his turn, frankly acknowledged the truth forced upon him. "I see you do not find my paper what you wished, and I believe you are right," he said; and then, turning all at once to Pascal, he said, "But you, who are young, who are clever,[2] you ought to do something."

[1] Recueil d'Utrecht, p. 271. See also Sainte-Beuve, vol. iii. p. 536.

[2] *Curieux* in the sense, says Sainte-Beuve, of *bel-esprit, amateur.*

The effect was not lost upon Pascal. He divined with his genuine literary instinct exactly what was required in the circumstances, although distrusting his power to produce it. He promised, however, to make an attempt, which his friends might polish and put in shape as they thought fit. Next day he produced "A Letter written to a Provincial by one of his friends." The Letter was unanimously pronounced exactly what was required, and ordered to be printed. It appeared on the 23d January 1656; and a second followed six days later.

Nothing could have been happier or more admirably suited for their purpose than those Letters. They took up the subject for the first time in a light intelligible to all. They brought to play upon it not only a penetrating and rapid intelligence, but a brightness of wit, and a dramatic creativeness, which made the Sorbonne and its parties, the Jansenists and their friends, alive before the reader. Never was the triumph of genius over mere learned labour more complete. Arnauld, as he listened to them, must have felt his own thoughts spring up before him into a living shape, hardly less startling to himself than to his opponents.

Addressing his friend in the country, the author expresses his surprise at what he has come to learn of the character of the disputes dividing the Sorbonne:—

"We have been imposed upon," he says. "It was only yesterday that I was undeceived. Until then I had thought that the disputes of the Sorbonne were really important, and deeply affected the interests of religion. The frequent convocation of an assembly so illustrious as that of the Theological Faculty of Paris, attended by so many extraordinary and unprecedented circumstances, induced such high expectations that one could not help believing the business to

be of extraordinary importance. You will be much surprised, however, when you learn from this letter the upshot of the grand demonstration. I can explain the matter in a few words, having made myself perfectly master of it."

Two questions, he says, were under examination—"the one a question of fact, the other a question of right."

He explains the question of fact as consisting in the point whether M. Arnauld was guilty of temerity in expressing his doubts as to the propositions being in Jansen's book after the bishops had declared that they were. No fewer than seventy-one doctors undertook his defence, maintaining that all that could reasonably be asked of him was to say that "he had not been able to find them, but that if they were in the book, he condemned them there."

"Some," he continues, "even went a step farther, and protested that, after all the search they had made in the book, they had never stumbled upon these propositions, and that they had, on the contrary, found sentiments entirely at variance with them. They then earnestly begged that if any doctor present had discovered them, he would have the goodness to point them out; adding that what was so easy could not be reasonably refused, as that would be the surest way to silence all objectors, M. Arnauld included. But this they have always refused to do. So much for the one side.

"On the other side are eighty secular doctors, and some forty mendicant friars, who have condemned M. Arnauld's proposition, without choosing to examine whether he has spoken truly or falsely—who, in fact, have declared that they have nothing to do with the veracity of his proposition, but simply with its temerity. Besides these were fifteen who were not in favour of the censure, and who are called Neutrals."

Having thus stated the question of fact, and the

balance of parties regarding it, Pascal dismisses it at once, important as it proved in the after-history of Port Royal.

"As to the issue of the question of fact, I own I give myself very little concern. It does not affect my conscience in the least whether M. Arnauld is presumptuous or the reverse; and should I be tempted from curiosity to ascertain whether these propositions are contained in Jansen, his book is neither so very scarce nor so very large but that I can read it all through for my own enlightenment without consulting the Sorbonne at all."

Only, while himself hitherto inclined to believe with common report that the propositions were in Jansen, he was now almost led to doubt that they were so from the absurd refusal to point them out. In this respect he fears the censure will do more harm than good. "For, in truth, people have become sceptical of late, and will not believe things till they see them."

But the point being in itself so frivolous, he hastens to take up the question of right, as touching the faith. And here the play of the dialogue begins:—

"You and I supposed that the question here was one involving the deepest principles of grace, as to whether it is given to all men, or whether it is efficacious of itself. But truly we were deceived. You must know I have become a great theologian in a short time, and you will see the proofs of it."

He describes, then, how he had made a visit to a doctor of the Sorbonne, who was his neighbour, and one of the most zealous opponents of the Jansenists, to inquire into the controversy. He asked him why the question as to grace should not be set at rest by a formal decision

that "grace is really given to all"? But he received a rude rebuff, and was told that this was not the point. "There were those on his side who held that grace is not given to all, and even the examiners themselves had declared, in a full meeting of the Sorbonne, that this opinion was problematical." This was, in fact, his own view; and he confirmed it by what he said was a celebrated passage of St Augustine, "We know that grace is not given to all men." He was equally unfortunate in his second inquiry. His neighbour, opposed as he was to Jansenism, would not condemn the doctrine of efficacious grace. The doctrine, on the contrary, was quite orthodox, was held by the Jesuits, and had even been defended by himself in his thesis at the Sorbonne. The inquirer is confounded, and ventures to ask then in what M. Arnauld's heresy consisted? "In this," replies his friend, "that he does not acknowledge that the just have the power of obeying the commandments of God in the way in which we understand it." Having got to what he supposes the "heart of the affair," he posts off to a Jansenist acquaintance, "a very decent man notwithstanding." But if he was puzzled before, he is still more puzzled when he hears the worthy Jansenist declare that it is no heresy to hold that "all the just have always the power of obeying the Divine commandments." Confounded by such a reply, he felt that he had been too plain-spoken with both Jansenist and Molinist.[1] There must be something more in this dispute than he understood; and if not, there was no reason why there

[1] A name applied to the Jesuits after Louis Molina, a Spanish Jesuit (1535-1600), whose "Scientia Media," akin to the Arminian doctrine of Divine foreknowledge, was very famous in its day.

should not now be peace in the Church and the Sorbonne. He returned to the Molinist, whom he had first visited, with this assurance. The Jansenists, he said, were quite at one with the Jesuits as to the power of the righteous always to obey the commandments of God.

"All very well," said he, "but you must be a theologian to see the end of the matter. The difference between us is so subtle that we can hardly make it out ourselves. It is quite beyond *your* understanding. Suffice it for you to know that the Jansenists will indeed say that the just have always the power of obeying the commandments—this is not the point in dispute; but they will not say that this power is *proximate*. *That* is the point."

Mystified more than ever by this new and unknown expression, of which he could get no explanation, the inquirer now returned to his Jansenist friend to demand of him if he admitted it. "Do you admit the *proximate power?*" was all that he could say to him. He had charged his memory carefully with the expression, all the more that he did not understand it. The Jansenist smiled, and said coldly, "Tell me in what sense you use the expression, and I will tell you what I believe about it." But this was just what he could not do. So he gave the haphazard answer, that he used it "in the sense of the Molinists." "Which of the Molinists?" was the rejoinder. "All of them together, as being one body, and having one and the same mind," was the second answer at random: upon which he is assured he is very ill informed; that the Molinists, instead of being at one, are hopelessly divided, but that being united in the design to ruin M. Arnauld, they have all agreed to use

this term, understanding it in different senses, and so by an apparent agreement to form a compact body in order to crush him more confidently.

The ingenuous inquirer hesitates to believe in such wickedness. He professes himself to be animated by a pure desire of understanding the subject, and asks still that the mysterious word *proximate* may be explained to him. His Jansenist friend professes a willingness to enlighten him, but says that his explanation would be liable to suspicion. He must have recourse to those who invented the expression, and is referred to a M. le Moine, on the one hand, as representing the Molinists or Jesuits; and a Father Nicolai as representing the Dominicans or "New Thomists." Both of these were real characters: the former a doctor of the Sorbonne, and a violent anti-Jansenist, who had written on the subject of grace; the latter a Dominican, who is said, however, by Nicole to have abandoned the principles of his order and embraced Pelagianism. The bewildered seeker after theological knowledge resorts, not to these worthies themselves, with whom he professes to have no acquaintance, but to certain disciples of theirs. In this manner he gets a definition of "proximate power," from which it is apparent that, while the Jesuits and Dominicans are only agreed in using the same expression—the meanings they put into it being entirely different—the Jansenists and Dominicans agree in substance, while only differing in the use of words. The passage in which the result of his successive interviews is described is one of the happiest in the letter. On receiving from the Dominicans, whom he terms "Jacobins," from their association with the Rue de St Jacques, where the first Dominican convent in Paris

was erected, an explanation of the doctrine of grace, he exclaims:—

"Capital! So, according to you, the Jansenists are Catholics, and M. le Moine a heretic; for the Jansenists say that the just have the power of praying, but that further efficacious grace is necessary—and this is what you also approve. M. le Moine, however, says that the just may pray without efficacious grace—and this you condemn. 'Ay,' they replied, 'but M. le Moine calls this power *proximate power.*' 'But what is this, my father,' I exclaimed in turn, 'but to play with words—to say that you agree as to the common terms you employ, while your sense is quite different?' To this they made no reply; and at this very point the disciple of M. le Moine, with whom I had consulted, arrived by what seemed to me a lucky and extraordinary conjuncture. But I afterwards found that these meetings were not uncommon; that, in fact, they were continually mixing the one with the other. I addressed myself immediately to M. le Moine's disciple: 'I know one,' said I, 'who maintains that the just have always the power of praying to God, but that nevertheless they never pray without an efficacious grace which determines them, and which is not always given by God to all the just. Is such a one a heretic?' 'Wait,' said my doctor; 'you take me by surprise. Come, gently. *Distinguo.* If he calls this power *proximate power,* he is a Thomist, and yet a Catholic; if not, he is a Jansenist, and therefore a heretic.' 'He calls it,' said I, 'neither the one nor the other.' 'He is a heretic then,' said he; 'ask these good fathers.' It was unnecessary to appeal to them, for already they had assented by a nod of their heads. But I insisted. 'He refuses to use the word *proximate,* because no one can explain it to him.' Whereupon one of the fathers was about to give his definition of the term, when he was interrupted by M. le Moine's disciple. 'What!' said he; 'do you wish to recommence our quarrels? Have we not agreed never to attempt an explanation of this word *proximate,* but to use it on both sides without saying what it means?' And to this the Jacobin assented,

I saw at once into their plot, and rising to quit them, I said, 'Of a truth, my fathers, this is nothing, I fear, but a quibble; and whatever may come of your meetings, I venture to predict that when the censure is passed, peace will not be restored. . . . Surely it is unworthy, both of the Sorbonne and of theology, to make use of equivocal and captious terms without giving any explanation of them. Tell me, I entreat you, for the last time, fathers, what I must believe in order to be a Catholic?' 'You must say,' they all cried at once, 'that all the just have the *proximate power*.' . . . 'What necessity can there be,' I argued, 'for using a word which has neither authority nor definite meaning?' 'You are an opinionative fellow,' they replied. 'You shall use the word, or you are a heretic, and M. Arnauld also; for we are the majority, and if necessary we can bring the Cordeliers into the field and carry the day.'"

The second Letter, entitled "Of Sufficient Grace," is exactly in the same vein:—

"Just as I had sealed my last letter," the writer opens, "I received a visit from our old friend, M. N——, a most fortunate circumstance for the gratification of my curiosity. For he is thoroughly informed in the questions of the day, and up to all the secrets of the Jesuits, at whose houses, including those of the leading men, he is a constant visitor."

Using his friend conveniently as an informant, Pascal proceeds to explain to the Provincial the question of sufficient grace as betwixt the Jesuits, Jansenists, and Dominicans. The amusement of the Letter consists in the manner in which he brings out, as before, the substantial identity in opinion of the Dominicans and Jansenists, notwithstanding the junction of the former with the Jesuits to oppress the latter. The Jesuits hold the old Pelagian doctrine that grace is given to all, dependent for its efficacy upon the free will of the recipient. This

is with them *sufficient grace*. The Jansenists follow St Augustine, and will not allow any grace to be *sufficient* which is not also efficacious. What is the view of the Dominican?—

"It is rather an odd one," he says; "for while they agree with the Jesuits in allowing a *sufficient grace* given to all men, they nevertheless hold that with this grace alone men cannot act, but require further from God an *efficacious grace* which determines their will to action, and which is not given to all."

In short, *this grace* is *sufficient* without being so. It bears the same name as the grace of the Jesuits, but in reality the Dominican doctrine is that of the Jansenists, that men require efficacious grace in order to pious action. What is the meaning of all this jumble of opinion? Simply, that the Dominicans are too powerful to be quarrelled with. The Jesuits are content that they should so far use the same language with them.

"They do not insist upon their denying the necessity of efficacious grace. This would be to press them too far. People should not tyrannise over their friends; and the Jesuits have really gained enough. But the world is content with words; and so the name of sufficient grace being received on all sides, though in different senses, none except the most subtle theologians can dream that the expression does not signify the same to the Jacobins and the Jesuits; and the result will show that the latter are not the greatest dupes."

This conclusion becomes the subject of conversational by-play, similar to that of the first Letter:—

"I went straight," adds the writer, "to the Jacobins, at whose door I found a good friend of mine, a great Jansenist —for you must know I have friends amongst all parties—

who was inquiring for another father, different from the one I wanted. But I persuaded him to accompany me, and asked for one of my New Thomist friends. He was delighted to see me again. 'Ah, well,' I said to him, 'it seems it is not enough that all men have a *proximate power* by which they can never act with effect; they must also have a *sufficient grace*, with which they can act just as little. Is not this the opinion of your school?' 'Yes,' said the good father, 'and I have this very morning been maintaining this in the Sorbonne. I spoke my full half-hour; and had it not been for the sand-glass, I bade fair to reverse the unlucky proverb which circulates in Paris—"He votes with his cap [merely by nodding his assent, without speaking] like a monk of the Sorbonne."' 'And what about your half-hour and your sand-glass?' said I. 'Do they shape your discourses by a certain measure?' 'Yes,' said he, 'for some days past.' 'And do they oblige you to speak half an hour?' 'No, we may speak as shortly as we like.' 'But not,' I said, 'as much as you like. What a capital rule for the ignorant—what an excellent excuse for those who have nothing worth saying! But to come to the point, my father—this grace which is given to all, is it sufficient?' 'Yes,' said he. 'And yet it has no effect without *efficacious* grace?'. 'Quite true,' said he. 'And all men have the *sufficient*, but not all the *efficacious?*' 'Exactly so.' 'That is to say,' I urged, 'that all have enough grace, and yet not enough—that there is a grace which is *sufficient*, and yet does not *suffice*. In good sooth, my father, that is subtle doctrine. Have you forgotten, in quitting the world, what the word *sufficient* means? Do you not remember that it includes everything necessary for acting? . . . How, then, do you leave it to be said, that all men have *sufficient* grace for acting, while you confess that another grace is absolutely necessary for acting, and that all have not this? . . . Is it a matter of indifference to say that with sufficient grace we can really act?' 'Indifference!' said he; why, it is *heresy*—formal *heresy*. The necessity of efficacious grace for effective action is a point of *faith*. It is heresy to deny this.' 'Where, then, are we now? and what side must I take? If I deny

sufficient grace, I am a Jansenist. If I admit it, like the Jesuits, so that efficacious grace is no longer necessary, I shall be a heretic, you say. And if I admit it, as you do, so that efficacious grace is still necessary, why I sin against common-sense, I am a blockhead, say the Jesuits. What can I do in this dilemma, of being a blockhead, a heretic, or a Jansenist? To what a strait are we come, if it is only Jansenists, after, all who are at variance with neither faith nor reason, and who preserve themselves both from folly and error?'"

The Dominican, in short, is made to appear very ridiculous in his union with the Jesuits. Clearly he fights on their side against the Jansenists at the expense of his honesty and consistency. He is confounded by a parable representing the absurdity of his position.

"'It is all very easy to talk,' was all he could say in reply. 'You are an independent and private person; I am a monk, and in a community. Do you not understand the difference? We depend upon superiors; they depend upon others. They have promised our votes, and what would you have me to do?' We understood his allusion, and remembered how a brother monk had been banished to Abbeville for a similar cause."

The writer is disposed to pity the monk as he relates with a melancholy tone how the Dominicans, who had from the time of St Thomas been such ardent defenders of the doctrine of grace, had been entrapped into making common cause with the Jesuits. The latter, availing themselves of the confusion and ignorance introduced by the Reformation, had disseminated their principles with great rapidity, and become masters of the popular belief; while the poor Dominicans found themselves in the predicament of either being denounced as Calvinists, and treated as the Jansenists then were, or of falling into

the use of a common language with the Jesuits. What other course was open to them in such a case than that of saving the truth at the expense of their own credit! and while admitting the name of sufficient grace, denying, after all, that it was sufficient! That was the real history of the business.

This pitiful story of the New Thomist awakens a respondent pity in the writer. But his Jansenist companion is roused to indignant remonstrance:—

"Do not flatter yourselves," he exclaims, "that you have saved the truth. If it had no other protector than you, it would have perished in such feeble hands. You have received into the Church the name of its enemy, and this is to receive the enemy itself. Names are inseparable from things. If the term *sufficient* grace be once admitted, you may talk finely about only understanding thereby a grace insufficient; but this will be of no avail. Your explanation will be held as odious in the world, where men speak far more sincerely of less important things. The Jesuits will triumph. It will be their sufficient grace, and not yours—which is only a name—which will be accepted. It will be theirs, which is the reverse of yours, that will become an article of faith."

In vain the New Thomist proclaims his readiness to suffer martyrdom rather than allow this, and to maintain the great doctrine of St Thomas to the death. His allusion to the importance of the doctrine only calls forth more severely the indignant eloquence of the Jansenist, and he brings the Letter to a close in a passage which forestalls the graver and loftier tone of the later Letters.

"Confess, my father, that your order has received an honour which it ill discharges. It abandons that grace which has been intrusted to it, and which has never been

abandoned since the creation of the world. That victorious grace which was expected by patriarchs, predicted by prophets, introduced by Jesus Christ, preached by St Paul, explained by St Augustine, the greatest of the Fathers, embraced by his followers, confirmed by St Bernard, the last of the Fathers, sustained by St Thomas, the Angel of the Schools, transmitted by him to your order, maintained by so many of your fathers, and so gloriously defended by your monks under Popes Clement and Paul—that efficacious grace which was left in your hands as a sacred deposit, that it might always, in a sacred and enduring order, find preachers to proclaim it to the world till the end of time—finds itself deserted for interests utterly unworthy. It is time that other hands should arm themselves in its quarrel. It is time that God should raise up intrepid disciples to the Doctor of Grace, who, strangers to the entanglements of the world, should serve God for the sake of God. Grace may no longer count the Dominicans among her defenders; but she will never want defenders, for she creates them for herself by her own almighty strength. She demands pure and disengaged hearts, nay, she herself purifies and delivers them from worldly interests inconsistent with the truths of the Gospel. Consider well, my father, and take heed lest God remove the candlestick from its place, and leave you in darkness and dishonour to punish the coldness which you have shown in a cause so important to His Church."

The first two Letters are closely connected. They deal with the special question between Arnauld and the Sorbonne. A short "Reply from the Provincial" is interposed between the second and third. This reply may be supposed to be a part of the device employed by Pascal to arouse public attention and circulate the Letters. The friend in the country tells how they have excited universal interest. Everybody has seen them, heard them, and believed them. They are valued not merely

by theologians, but men of the world, and ladies, have found them intelligible and delightful reading. This is no exaggerated picture of the sensation which they produced. Their success was prodigious, and increased with every successive Letter. In an atmosphere charged with the theological spirit, yet wearied with the dulness of theological controversy, Pascal's mode of treating the subject came as a breath of new life. Here was one who was evidently no mere theologian — who knew human nature as well as Divine truth. His clear and penetrating intellect saw at once the many aspects of the dispute lying deep in the human interests and passions engaged; and as he touched these one by one, and by subtle and vivid strokes brought them to the front—as Molinist, New Thomist, and Jansenist appeared upon the scene, and showed in their natural characters what play of dramatic life was moving under all the dulness of the debate at the Sorbonne—there was a universal outcry of welcome. The Letters passed from hand to hand. The post-office reaped a harvest of profit; copies went through the whole kingdom.

"'You can have no idea how much I am obliged to you for the Letter you sent me,' writes a friend to a lady; 'it is so very ingenious, and so nicely written. It narrates without narrating. It clears up the most intricate matters possible; its raillery is exquisite; it enlightens those who know little of the subject, and imparts double delight to those who understand it. It is an admirable apology; and if they would take it, a delicate and innocent censure. In short, the Letter displays so much art, so much spirit, and so much judgment, that I burn with curiosity to know who wrote it.'"

This is the report of the Provincial; and if it is Pascal himself who speaks, he had little idea that his own

badinage would be echoed by grave critics, in after-years, as not in excess of the actual merit of his productions. "The best comedies of Molière," says Voltaire, "have not more wit than the first Provincial Letters." It must be admitted that the brightness of the wit is somewhat dimmed after the lapse of two centuries. Even the genius of Pascal fails to lighten all the tortuous absurdities of controversies so purely verbal, and there is an occasional baldness in the clever device of pitting Molinist, New Thomist, and Jansenist against one another. The professed artlessness of the speeches is at times too apparent. But nothing, upon the whole, can be finer than the address with which this is done; the changes of scene and the turns of the dialogue are managed with admirable felicity; there is an exquisite fitness and Socratic point in all the evolutions of the argument, which we feel even now when we see so clearly behind the scenes, and know that Molinist and New Thomist must have had a good deal more to say for themselves. We have only to imagine the atmosphere of the Sorbonne, or the wider social atmosphere throughout France in the seventeenth century, impregnated to its core by a subtle controversial ecclesiasticism, to realise the impression made by "the Small Letters." The question everywhere was, Who could have written them? There seems at first to have been no suspicion of Pascal. He had previously only been known as a scientific writer; and the secret was, of course, jealously guarded. Although planned at Port Royal des Champs, he did not remain there while engaged in their composition. He repaired, as we have already said, to Paris, and after a while took up his abode "at a little inn opposite to

the Jesuit College of Clermont, just behind the Sorbonne. Here he lodged with his brother-in-law, M. Périer, who had lately come to Paris; and here, too, the latter was visited by Père Defrétat, a Jesuit and distant relative, who came to tell him that the suspicions of the Society were beginning to point to Pascal. All the while Pascal was busy in the room below; and, "behind the closed curtains of the bed by the side of which they were talking, a score of fresh impressions of the seventh Letter were laid out to dry."[1]

Pascal rejoiced in his incognito. It was not till the controversy had somewhat advanced that he assumed the pseudonym Louis de Montalte. The third Letter he closed mysteriously with the letters E. A. A. B. P. A. F. D. E. P., which have been interpreted to mean "Et ancien ami Blaise Pascal, Auvergnat, fils de Étienne Pascal." There can be no doubt that he took a distinct pleasure in the anonymous wounds which he inflicted. He had a certain love of controversy from the beginning, a feeling of self-assertion when he took up a cause, and a personal ambition to triumph in it, which carried him forward, and which come out with almost painful vividness in the closing letters.

The rage of the Jesuits may be imagined. At first they hardly knew whether to laugh with the world or to be indignant. The first Letter was read in the dining-hall of the Sorbonne itself. Some were amused, others greatly provoked. But, as the Letters proceeded, there was no room for any feeling but indignation. It was so difficult to set forth any direct reply to productions mingling such a

[1] Beard's Port Royal, vol. i. p. 271. Founded on Recueil d'Utrecht, p. 278, and Sainte-Beuve, t. ii. p. 555.

subtle irony with grave attack. They could only say of them, as they afterwards more formally did—*Les menteurs immortelles.* Of the first Letters it is said that 6000 copies were printed; but, as they were easily passed from hand to hand, this gives no idea of the numbers who actually read them. Their fame grew with each successive issue. More than 10,000 copies were printed of the seventeenth Letter; and editions of the earlier ones were so frequently reprinted, that it can no longer be told which belonged really to the first edition.

It is impossible, and would be useless, for us to attempt any description of the whole series of Letters. We have thought it right to dwell at some length on the first two, because they enter so directly into the controversy betwixt Pascal's friends and the Sorbonne, and because they are really, in some respects, the cleverest, if not the most valuable. The third Letter, on the "Censure of M. Arnauld," and again, the three concluding Letters,[1] are closely connected with the first two. Their object, in one form or another, is the defence of the Jansenist doctrine, and of the Port Royalists, as its supporters. The intervening twelve Letters stand quite by themselves. They open up the whole subject of the moral theology of the Jesuits, and constitute the most powerful assault probably ever directed against it. The subject is one

[1] M. Sainte-Beuve connects only the two concluding Letters with the first two, but the sixteenth Letter also, upon the whole, as a direct defence of Jansen and Port Royal, may be said to connect itself with these rather than with the intervening series assailing the Jesuits. There were eighteen Letters in all published by Pascal, but there is a brief fragment of a nineteenth Letter supposed to be also from his pen, and a farther Letter from the pen of M. le Maitre on the Inquisition, commonly printed along with the others.

which, in a volume like this, we can only touch upon, and this more with the view of drawing out the marked literary features of Pascal's assault, than of meddling with the merits of the controversy which he waged so relentlessly. In the meantime, we must wind up, as briefly as possible, the more personal aspects of the controversy.

Between the date of the second and the third Letter, the process before the Sorbonne had been finished, and M. Arnauld's censure pronounced. The third Letter deals with this censure. The writer represents the long preparation for it, the manner in which the Jansenists had been denounced as the vilest of heretics, "the cabals, factions, errors, schisms, and outrages with which they have been so long charged." Who would not have thought, in such circumstances, that the "blackest heresy imaginable" would have come forth under the condemning touch of the Sorbonne? All Christendom waited for the result. It was true that M. Arnauld had backed up his opinions by the clearest quotations from the Fathers, expressing apparently the very things with which he had been charged. But points of difference imperceptible to ordinary eyes would no doubt be made clear under the penetration of so many learned doctors. Thoughts of this kind kept everybody in a state of breathless suspense waiting for the result. "But, alas! how has the expectation been balked! Whether the Molinist doctors have not deigned to lower themselves to the level of instructing us, or for some other secret reason, they have done nothing else than pronounce the following words: 'This proposition is rash, impious, blasphemous, deserving of anathema, and heretical!'"

It was not to be wondered at, in the circumstances, that people were in a bad humour, and were beginning to think that after all there may have been no real heresy in M. Arnauld's proposition. A heresy which could not be defined, except in general terms of abuse, seemed at the least doubtful. The writer is puzzled, as usual, and has recourse to "one of the most intelligent of the Sorbonnists" who had been so far neutral in the discussion, and whom he asks to point out the difference betwixt M. Arnauld and the Fathers. The "intelligent" Sorbonnist is amused at the *naïveté* of the inquiry. "Do you fancy," he says, "that if they could have found any difference they would not have pointed it out?" But why, then, pursues the ingenuous inquirer, should they in such a case pass censure?—

"'How little you understand the tactics of the Jesuits!' is the answer. 'How few will ever look into the matter beyond the fact that M. Arnauld is condemned! Let it be only cried in the streets, "Here is the condemnation of M. Arnauld!" This is enough to give the Jesuits a triumph with the unthinking populace. This is the way in which they live and prosper. Now it is by a catechism in which a child is made to condemn their opponents; now by a procession, in which Sufficient Grace leads Efficacious Grace in triumph; and by-and-by by a comedy, in which the devils carry off Jansen; sometimes by an almanac; and now by this censure.' The truth is, that it is M. Arnauld himself, and not merely his opinions, that are obnoxious. Even M. le Moine himself admitted 'that the same proposition would have been orthodox in the mouth of any other; it is only as coming from M. Arnauld that the Sorbonne have condemned it.' . . . Here is a new species of heresy," concludes the writer. "It is not the sentiments of M. Arnauld that are heretical, but only his person. It is a case of personal heresy.

He is not a heretic for anything he has said or written, but simply because he is M. Arnauld. This is all they can say against him. Whatever he may do, unless he cease to exist he will never be a good Catholic. The grace of St Augustine will never be the true grace while he defends it. It would be all right were he only to combat it. This would be a sure stroke, and almost the only means of establishing it and destroying Molinism. Such is the fatality of any opinions which he embraces."

In the three concluding Letters, as we have said, Pascal reverts to the special subject of Jansenism and Port Royal. These Letters are considerably longer than the opening ones. It is of the sixteenth, in fact, that he makes the well-known remark, that "it was very long because he had no time to make it shorter." Upon the whole, also, these Letters are less happy in style and manner. It is evident that Pascal, if he gave blows which made his opponents and the opponents of Port Royal wince, also received some bruises in return. The shamelessness of the attacks made upon his friends and himself, contemptible as they were in their nature, left scars upon a mind and temper so sensitive and reserved as his. The "insufferable audacity" with which "holy nuns and their directors" had been charged with disbelieving the mysteries of the faith was "a crime which God alone was capable of punishing." To bear such a charge required a degree of humility equal to that of the nuns themselves—to believe it, "a degree of wickedness equal to that of their wretched defamers." As for himself, it seemed enough to say of him that he belonged to Port Royal, as if it were only at Port Royal that there could be found those capable of defending the purity of Christian morality. He knew and honoured the work

of the pious recluses who had retired to that monastery, although "he had never had the honour of belonging to them." And in the seventeenth Letter he says:—

"I have no more to say than that I am not a member of that community, and to refer you to my letters, in which I have declared that 'I am a private individual;' and again in so many words that 'I am not of Port Royal.' . . . You may touch Port Royal if you choose, but you shall not touch me. You may turn people out of the Sorbonne, but that will not turn me out of my lodging."

These statements, of course, are to be received as so far a part of the disguise under which Pascal pursued his task. It was true that he had no official connection with Port Royal, that he was under no rule to live in its retirements, and that he was only occasionally found there. He was singularly free, "without engagements, entanglement, relationship, or business of any kind." All the same he was a Port Royalist in sympathy and community of opinion. The interests of Port Royal were his interests, and its friends his friends. His own sister was one of its zealous inmates. There is a certain force, therefore, in the taunt that Pascal, in "unmasking the duplicity of the Jesuits, did not hesitate to imitate it." His statements are not beyond the licence accorded to those who would drive an enemy off the scent, and shelter themselves within an anonymity which they have chosen to assume; but they are none the less artful and misleading. They justify themselves as the fence of the *littérateur*, hardly as the armour of the moralist. But the truth is, that long before this Pascal had warmed to his work as a controversialist. He was determined to give no advantage, and to spare no weapons

within the bounds of decency, that might make the Jesuits feel the force of his assault. Their accusation of heresy especially exasperated him.

"When was I ever seen at Charenton?"[1] he says in the seventeenth Letter, addressed to the Jesuit Father Annat. "When have I failed in my presence at mass, or in my Christian duty to my parish church? What act of union with heretics, or of schism with the Church, can you lay to my charge? What council have I contradicted? What Papal constitution have I violated? You *must answer*, father; else —you know what I mean."

The Jansenist doctrine of grace, as we have already explained, approached indefinitely the doctrine of Calvin. Both were derived from Augustine; and St Thomas, as his interpreter, handed on to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the precious deposit. The line of thought was continuous, and it was not easy to break it at Calvin, and isolate him as a heretic, while holding to other teachers as Catholic and orthodox. This was the dilemma of the New Thomists, so pithily expressed by one of themselves in the second Letter. But it was also Pascal's own dilemma; and the consciousness which he and his friends had of the nearness of the Jansenist doctrine to that of Calvin, made them all the more sensitive under the charge of heresy. The Jesuits had art enough to see the advantages which came from this association. The Port Royalists and Pascal failed in the magnanimity which clung to a truth no less because it was identified with an abused name. They insisted upon dis-

[1] After the Edict of Nantes (1598), the Protestants were permitted to assemble for worship at Charenton, a small town about four miles from Paris.

tinguishing between the tenets of Jansen and Calvinism. If what the Papal decree meant and the Sorbonne meant in the condemnation of the Jansenist proposition was that they condemned the doctrines of Calvin, then they were all agreed—Jesuits, Jansenists, and Port Royalists.

"Was that all you meant, father?" asks Pascal in his concluding Letter. "Was it only the error of Calvin that you were so anxious to get condemned under the name of 'the sense of Jansen'? Why did you not tell us this sooner? you might have saved yourself a world of trouble; for we were all ready without the aid of bulls or briefs to join with you in condemning that error. . . . Now, when you have come the length of declaring that the error which you oppose is the heresy of Calvin, it must be apparent to every one that they [the Port Royalists] are innocent of all error; for so decidedly hostile are they to this, the only error with which you charge them, that they protest by their discourses, by their books, by every mode, in short, in which they can testify their sentiments, that they condemn that heresy with their whole heart, and in the same manner in which it has been condemned by the Thomists, whom you acknowledge without scruple to be Catholics."

The professed point of difference stated in the same Letter—namely, that the Thomists and Sorbonnists (and of course the Port Royalists with them) held that efficacious grace is resistible, while Calvin held that it was irresistible—may or may not hold in reference to special expressions of Calvin. But there is nothing, upon the whole, stronger in Calvin than there is in Augustine on the subject of grace; and on the other hand, an "efficacious grace," which is "resistible"—which the human heart can accept or repel *at will*—seems open to all the ironical play which Pascal directs so skilfully in his first

Letters against the Jesuit doctrine of a *sufficient* grace which is not yet sufficient. The truth is, that apart from verbal subtilties, which Pascal could handle no less familiarly, only far more skilfully, than his adversaries, there is no rational position intermediate between the Pelagian doctrine (which is also substantially the Aristotelian) of free will and moral habit, and the Augustinian doctrine of Divine grace and spiritual inspiration. The source of character is either from within the character itself, which has power to choose good and to be good if it will, or it is from a higher source—the grace of God, and the power of a Divine ordination. These are the only real lines of controversy. The Christian thinker may decline controversy on such a subject altogether, acknowledging that the mystery of character is in its roots beyond our ken,—that we know not, and in the nature of the case cannot know, where the Human ends and the Divine begins. In such a case there is no room for argument. But we cannot with consistency step off one line on to the other. In other words, we cannot logically abuse Calvin while we hold with Augustine, or profess to revere St Thomas while we abuse Jansen.

But it is more than time to turn from this side of the 'Provincial Letters.' This was the controversy out of which they sprang—which mingles itself most with the personality of Pascal—and hence it has claimed a somewhat detailed treatment. The great subject to which the intervening and chief portion of the Letters is directed is not, indeed, more important in itself, but it is more diversified, and more practically interesting. Here, however, Pascal was more obviously performing a task than in the other Letters. He was speaking less out

of his heart. Having grappled with the Jesuits, and noticed their tactics in the affair of the Sorbonne, he is led to look into their whole system. He takes up their books and studies them, in part at least; while his friends Nicole and Arnauld also study them for him. And the result is the remarkable and memorable assault contained in his thirteen Letters—from the fourth to the sixteenth—directed against all the main principles of the Jesuit system.

It would lead us quite away from our purpose to enter into the range of this great controversy, or to endeavour to estimate its value, or the merits of the attack and defence on particular points. The subject is one by itself, more or less entering into the whole question of morals, and especially the immense fabric of casuistry or moral theology built up by successive teachers in the Jesuit schools. Trained, as he was, a devout disciple of the Roman Church, enthusiastic on behalf of its doctrines and preachers, Pascal had apparently no knowledge of the details of Jesuit doctrine and morality before he began his task of inquiry and assault. Austere and simple in his own principles of virtue, direct and unbending in his modes of action, he was evidently appalled by the study of the Jesuit system, and the endless complexities of compromise and evasion which it presented. In seizing, as he did everywhere, upon the immoral aspects of the system, and touching them with the most graphic colours of exposure, he cannot be said to be unfair; for the materials with which he dealt were all abundant in their writings. His quotations may be sometimes taken at random, and may set forth, without any of the alleviating shades surrounding them in their proper context, special

points as parts of a general sequence of thought. They were, no doubt, often furnished to him by Nicole or Arnauld, who hunted them through the immense volumes of casuistical divinity in which they were contained. But there is no reason to suppose that in any case he has been guilty of misquotation, or that he has attributed sentiments to the Jesuit doctors not to be found in them. This is very much his own statement:—

"I have been asked if I have myself read all the books which I have quoted. I answer, No. If I had done so, I must have passed a great part of my life in reading very bad books; but I have read Escobar twice through, and I have employed some of my friends in reading the others. But I have not made use of a single passage without having myself read it in the book from which it is cited, without having examined the subject of which it treats, and without having read what went before and followed, so that I might run no risk of quoting an objection as an answer, which would have been blameworthy and unfair."

No doubt this is true. There is all, and more than all, that Pascal quoted to be found in the Jesuit writings, and his own language is not too strong in speaking of much that he quotes as "abominable." Notwithstanding, it may be said that the effect of his representation is a certain unfairness towards the Jesuits. He presses them at a cruel advantage when he insists upon developing from his own point of view, or still more from the mouth of some of their too simple followers, all the practical consequences of their special rules. The system of casuistry was one not solely of Jesuitical invention. It was the necessary outgrowth of the radical Roman principle of Confession. Nay, it flourished to some extent within

the Protestant Church itself in the seventeenth century, as the writings of two very different men, Jeremy Taylor and Richard Baxter, show. Once admit the principle of directing the conscience by external rather than internal authority, and you lay a foundation upon which any amount of folly, and even crime, may be built up. This was the general principle of Jesuitism as a system of education; but it came to it from the Church which Pascal, no less than the Jesuits, revered. Nay, it was in its general character a principle as characteristic of Port Royal as of Loyola and his followers. There is the enormous difference, no doubt, that the ethics of Port Royal were comparatively faithful to the essential principles of morality which Nature and the Gospel alike teach—that its practical excesses were quite in a different direction from the laxity of the Jesuits. But two things are to be remembered, not in favour of the Jesuits, but in explanation of their excesses: 1st, that they aimed, as Pascal himself points out, at governing the world, and not merely a sect—that their whole idea of the Church in relation to the world was different from that of the Port Royalists; and 2d, that their system of morals not merely rested on a wrong and dangerous principle (which Pascal's no less did), but had been endlessly developed in their schools by many inferior hands. This was Pascal's great weapon against them, and so far it was quite a legitimate weapon, as he himself claimed. As none of their books could appear without sanction, the Order was more or less responsible for all the frightful principles set forth in some of these books. All the same, it is not to be presumed that such a system of moral, or rather immoral, consequences was

deliberately designed by the Society. Pascal himself exempts them from such a charge. "Their object," he says, "is not the corruption of manners; . . . but they believe it for the good of religion that they should *govern all consciences*, and so they have evangelical or severe maxims for managing some sorts of people, while whole multitudes of lax casuists are provided for the multitude that prefer laxity."[1] The Jesuit system of morality, in short, was the growth of the Jesuit principle of accommodation, added on to the Roman principle of external authority. Looking at morality entirely from without, as an artificial mode of regulating life and society for the supreme good of the Church, the Jesuit casuists were driven, under the necessities of such a system, from point to point, till all essential moral distinction was lost in the mechanical manipulations of their schools. Whatever happened, no man or woman was to be lost to the Church; the complications of human interest and passion were to be brought within its fold and smoothed into some sort of decent seeming, rather than cast beyond its pale and made the prey of its enemies.[2] The task was a hopeless one. In the pages of Pascal the Jesuits too obviously make a deplorable business both of religion and morality. But they were as much the victims as the authors of a system which Rome had sanctioned, and which came directly from the claims which it made to govern the world not merely by spiritual suasion, but by external influence. Jesuitism may be bad, and the Jesuit morality exposed by Pascal abominable, but the one and the other are the

[1] Letter V.

[2] "The grand project of our Society," Pascal makes his Jesuit informant say (Letter VI.), "is for the good of religion, never to repulse any one, let him be what he may, and so avoid driving people to despair."

natural outgrowth of a Church which had become a mechanism for the regulation of human conduct, rather than a spiritual power addressing freely the human heart and conscience.

Our space will not admit of an analysis of the thirteen Letters dealing with the Jesuits, and we can hardly give any quotations from them. Suffice it to say, that Pascal passes in the fourth Letter to a direct assault upon the Society. "Nothing can equal the Jesuits," the Letter begins. "I have seen Jacobins, doctors, and all sorts of people; but such a visit as I have made to-day baffles everything, and was necessary to complete my knowledge of the world." He then describes his visit to a very clever Jesuit, accompanied by his trusty Jansenist friend, and gradually unfolds from the mouth of the former the whole system of moral theology which had grown up in the Jesuit schools,—their notions of "actual grace," or the necessity of a special conscious knowledge that an act is evil, and ought to be avoided, before we can be said to be guilty of sin in committing the act; their famous doctrines of *probabilism* and of *directing the intention*, and all the consequences springing out of them. Nothing can be more ingenious than the manner in which the Jesuit is led forward to unfold point after point of his hateful system, as if it were one of the greatest boons which had ever been invented for mankind, until from concession to concession he is plunged into the most horrible conclusions, and the Jansenist can stand the disclosures no longer, but breaks forth in the end of the tenth Letter into a powerful and eloquent denunciation of the doctrines to which he has been listening.

Any lighter vein that may have lingered in the Letters is abandoned from this point. Pascal ceases to address his friend in the country; the playful interchange that sprang from the idea of a third party, to whom Pascal was supposed to be merely reporting what he had heard, occurs no more. He turns to the Jesuit fathers directly, and addresses them, as if unable any longer to restrain his indignation, commencing the eleventh Letter with an admirable defence of his previous tone, and of the extent to which he had used the weapon of ridicule in assailing them, and passing on to reiterate his charges, and to repel the calumnies with which they had assailed him and his Port Royalist friends. The reader may weary, perhaps, for a little, as he threads his way through the successive accusations, and the monotonous train of evil principles which underlies them all, more or less. He may wish that Pascal had gone to the roots of the system more completely, and had laid bare its germinal falsehood, instead of heaping detail upon detail, and always adding a darker hue to the picture which he draws. But any such mode of treatment would not half so well have served his purpose. His audience were not prepared for any philosophy of exposure, still less for any attack upon the essential principles of the Church; he himself did not see how the successive laxities which he fixes with his poignant satire, or sets in the light of his withering scorn, spring from a vicious conception of Christianity and of the office of the Church. He does what he does, however, with exquisite effect; and the Jesuit Order, many and powerful as have been its opponents, never before nor since felt itself more keenly and unanswerably assailed. Many of them were forced

to laugh at the picture of their own follies, and the immoral nonsense which distilled from the lips of Father Bauny and others, in explanation or defence of their practices. "Read that," says the confidential Jesuit who expounds to Pascal their system: "it is 'The Summary of Sins,' by Father Bauny; the fifth edition, you see, which shows that it is a good book. 'In order to sin,' says Father Bauny, 'it is necessary to know that the *thing we wish to do is not good.*'" "A capital commencement," I remarked. "Yet," said he, "only think how far envy will carry some people. It was on this very passage that M. Hallier, before he became one of our friends, quizzed Father Bauny, saying of him '*Ecce qui tollit peccata mundi*—Behold the man who taketh away the sins of the world.'"[1] Then after an elaborate description of all that goes to make a sin—

"'O my dear sir,' cried I, 'what a blessing this will be to some friends of my acquaintance! . . . You have never, perhaps, in all your life met with people who have fewer sins to account for! In the first place, they never think of God at all, still less of praying to Him; so that, according to M. le Moine, they are still in a state of baptismal innocence. They have never had a thought of loving God, or of being contrite for their sins; so that, according to Father Annat, they have never committed sin through the want of charity and penitence. . . . I had always supposed that the less a man thought of God the more he sinned; but from what I see now, if one could only succeed in bringing himself not to think of God at all, everything would be peace with him in all time coming. Away with your half-and-half sinners who have some love for virtue! They will be damned every one of them. But as for your out-and-out sinners, hardened

[1] Letter IV.

and without mixture, thorough and determined in their evil courses, hell is no place for them. They have cheated the devil by stern devotion to his service!'"[1]

It is in hits like these, everywhere scattered throughout the earlier letters, to which no translation can do justice, and which lose half their edge by being separated from their context, that the wit of Pascal shines. A more delicate, and at the same time more scathing irony, cannot be conceived. He hits with the lightest stroke, and in the most natural manner, yet his lash cuts the flesh, and leaves an intolerable smart. All that could be said in answer was, that his representations were lies. They were conscious exaggerations, no doubt, as all satirical representations are. This is of their very nature. But the extent to which they told, and the bitterness of the feeling which they excited at the time, and have continued to excite amongst the Jesuits and their friends, show how much truth there was in them. Nothing can be more pitiful and less satisfactory than mere complaints of their falsehood. Such complaints were hardly to have been expected from any other quarter than the Jesuits themselves. Yet even Chateaubriand, in his new-born zeal for the Church, could say of their author, "Pascal is only a calumniator of genius. He has left us an immortal lie."

Of the graver part of the Letters, the following are the only extracts that our space will permit:—

JESUIT LAXITY AND CHRISTIAN INDIGNATION.

"Such is the way in which our teachers have discharged men from the 'painful' obligation of actually loving God.

[1] Letter IV.

And so advantageous a doctrine is this, that our Fathers Annat, Pintereau, Le Moine, and A. Sirmond even, have defended it vigorously when assailed by any one. You have only to consult their answers in the 'Moral Theology;' that of Father Pintereau, in particular (second part), will enable you to judge of the value of this dispensation by the price which it has cost, even the blood of Jesus. This is the crown of such a doctrine." (A quotation is then given from Father Pintereau to the effect that it is a characteristic of the new Evangelical law, in contrast to the Judaical, that "God has lightened the troublesome and arduous obligation of exercising an act of perfect contrition in order to be justified.") "'O father,' said I, 'no patience can stand this any longer. One cannot hear without horror such sentiments as I have been listening to.' 'They are not my sentiments,' said the monk. 'I know that well; but you have expressed no aversion to them; and far from detesting the authors of such maxims, you cherish esteem for them. Do you not fear that your consent will make you a participator in their guilt? Was it not sufficient to allow men so many forbidden things under cover of your palliations? Was it necessary to afford them the occasion of committing crimes that even you cannot excuse by the facility and assurance of absolution which you offer them? . . . The licence which your teachers have assumed of tampering with the most holy rules of Christian conduct amounts to a total subversion of the Divine law. They violate the great commandment which embraces the law and the prophets; they strike at the very heart of piety; they take away the spirit which giveth life. They say that the love of God is not necessary to salvation; they even go the length of professing that this dispensation from loving God is the special privilege which Jesus Christ has brought into the world. This is the very climax of impiety. The price of the blood of Jesus, the purchase for us of a dispensation from loving Him! Before the incarnation we were under the necessity of loving God. But since God has so loved the world as to give His only Son for it, the world, thus redeemed by Him, is discharged from loving Him! Strange theology

of our time!—to take away the anathema pronounced by St Paul against those "who love not the Lord Jesus Christ;" to blot out the saying of St John, that "he that loveth not abideth in death;" and the words of Jesus Christ Himself, "He that loveth me not keepeth not my commandments!" In this manner those who have never loved God in life are rendered worthy of enjoying Him throughout eternity. Behold the mystery of iniquity accomplished! Open your eyes, my father; and if you have remained untouched by the other distortions of your Casuists, let this last by its excess compel you to abandon them.'"[1]

DEFENCE OF RIDICULE AS A WEAPON IN CONTROVERSY.

"What, my fathers! must the imaginations of your doctors pass for faithful verities? Must we not expose the sayings of Escobar,[2] and the fantastic and unchristian statements of others, without being accused of laughing at religion? Is it possible you have dared to repeat anything so unreasonable? and have you no fear that in blaming me for ridiculing your absurdities, you were merely furnishing me with a fresh subject of arousing attack, and of pointing out more clearly that I have not found in your books any subject of laughter which is not in itself intensely ridiculous; and that in making a jest of your moral maxims, I am as far from making a jest of holy things as the doctrine of your Casuists is distant from the holy doctrine of the Gospel? In truth, sirs, there is a vast difference between laughing at religion

[1] Letter X.

[2] "Who is Escobar?" Pascal represents himself as inquiring in the fifth Letter. "Not know Escobar?" cries the monk; "the member of the Society who compiled a Moral Theology from twenty-four of our fathers." This book, which Pascal says he "read twice through," was the great repository from which he gathered the details of Jesuit doctrine which he exposes with such minuteness. Escobar, like so many of the chief Jesuit writers, was a Spaniard, born at Valladolid in 1589. His name became a sort of proverb in connection with their casuistical system, and "escobarder" came to signify "to palter in a double sense."

and laughing at those who profane it by their extravagant opinions. It were an impiety to fail in respect for the great truths which the Divine Spirit has revealed; but it would be no less impiety of another kind to fail in contempt for falsehoods which the spirit of man has opposed to them. . . . Just as Christian truths are worthy of love and respect, the errors which oppose them are worthy of contempt and hatred: for as there are two things in the truths of our religion—a divine beauty which renders them lovable, and a holy majesty which renders them venerable; so there are two things in such errors—an impiety which makes them horrible, and an impertinence which renders them ridiculous." [1]

Many examples from the Scriptures and the Fathers are then quoted in defence of the practice of directing ridicule against error; and he closes with a singularly appropriate passage from Tertullian: "Nothing is more due to vanity than laughter; it is the Truth properly that has a right to laugh, because she is cheerful—and to make sport of her enemies, because she is sure of victory."

"Do you not think, my fathers, that this passage is singularly applicable to our subject? The letters which I have hitherto written are 'only a little sport before the real combat.' As yet I have been only playing with the foils, and 'rather indicating the wounds that might be given you than inflicting any.' I have merely exposed your sayings to the light, without commenting on them. 'If they have excited laughter, it is only because they are so laughable in themselves.' These sayings come upon us with such surprise, it is impossible to help laughing at them; for nothing produces laughter more than surprising disproportion between what one hears and what one expects. In what other way could the most of these matters be treated? for, as Tertullian says, 'To treat them seriously would be to sanction them.'" [2]

[1] Letter XI. [2] Ibid.

Appeal against the Jesuits.

"Too long have you deceived the world, and abused the confidence which men have put in your impostures. It is high time to vindicate the reputation of so many people whom you have calumniated; for what innocence can be so generally acknowledged as not to suffer contamination from the daring aspersion of a society of men scattered throughout the world, who, under religious habits, cover irreligious minds; who perpetrate crimes as they concoct slanders—not against, but in conformity with, their own maxims? No one can blame me, surely, for having destroyed the confidence which you might otherwise have inspired, since it is far more just to vindicate for so many good people whom you have decried, the reputation for piety they deserved, than to leave you a reputation for sincerity which you have never merited. And as the one could not be done without the other, how important was it to make the world understand what you really are. This is what I have begun to do; but it will require time to complete the work. The world, however, shall hear of you, my fathers, and all your policy will not avail to shelter you. The very efforts you make to ward off the blow will only serve to convince the least enlightened that you are afraid, and that, smitten in your own consciences by my charges, you have had recourse to every expedient to prevent exposure."[1]

The effect of the 'Provincial Letters' was not only to alarm the Jesuits, but the Church. The scandal of their exposure was so deeply felt, that the *curés* of Paris and Rouen appointed committees to investigate the accuracy of Pascal's quotations, and the result of their investigation was entirely in Pascal's favour. This led ultimately to the matter being carried before a General Assembly of the clergy of Paris, which, however, declined to give any

[1] Letter XV.

formal decision. In the meantime, an 'Apology for the Casuists' was published by a Jesuit of the name of Pirot, of such a character as to increase rather than abate the scandal, and a new controversy gathered around this publication. The Sorbonne took up the question, and, after examination, condemned Pirot's Apology (July 1658) as they had formerly done Arnauld's propositions, and ultimately it was included by Rome in the 'Index Expurgatorius,' along with the 'Provincial Letters,' to which it was designed as a reply. While the question was before the Sorbonne, the *curés* of Paris published various writings, under the name of 'Facta,' in support of the conclusions to which they had come. These writings were prepared in concert with Pascal and his friends, and the second and fifth are ascribed entirely to his pen. It is even said that he looked upon the latter, in which he drew a parallel betwixt the Jesuits and Calvinists (to the disadvantage of the Protestants), as the *best thing he ever did.*[1] Long after Pascal's death (in 1694) an elaborate answer appeared, by Father Daniel, to the 'Provincial Letters,' under the title of 'Entretiens de Cléandre et d'Eudoxe sur les Lettres au Provincial;' but notwithstanding a certain amount of learning and apparent candour, the reply made no impression upon the public. Even the Jesuits themselves felt it to be a failure. "Father Daniel," it was said, "professed to have reason and truth on his side; but his adversary had in his favour what goes much farther with men,—the arms of ridicule and pleasantry." As late as 1851 an edition of the 'Letters' appeared by the Abbé Maynard, accompanied by a pro-

[1] This is Sainte-Beuve's statement (t. iii. p. 138), repeated by Mr Beard, and founded apparently on Nicole.

fessed refutation of their misstatements. But the truth is, Pascal's work is one of those which admit of no adequate refutation. Even if it be granted that he has occasionally made the most of a quotation, and brought points together which, taken separately in their connection, have not the offensive meaning attributed to them, this touches but little the reader who has enjoyed their exquisite raillery or has been moved by their indignant denunciation. The real force of the Letters lies in their wit and eloquence — their mingled comedy and invective. They may be parried or resented — they can never be refuted.

We have already quoted Voltaire's saying, "The best comedies of Molière have not more wit than the first Provincial Letters." "Bossuet," he added, "has nothing more sublime than the concluding ones." They were regarded by him as "models of eloquence and pleasantry," as the "first work of genius" that appeared in French prose. When Bossuet himself was asked of what work he would most wish to have been the author, he answered, "The 'Provincial Letters.'" Madame de Sévigné writes of them (Dec. 21, 1689): "How charming they are! . . . Is it possible to have a more perfect style, an irony finer, more delicate, more natural, more worthy of the Dialogues of Plato? . . . And what seriousness of tone, what solidity, what eloquence in the last eight Letters!" Our Gibbon attributed to their frequent perusal his own mastery of "grave and temperate irony." Boileau pronounced them "unsurpassed" in ancient or modern prose. Encomiums could hardly go higher, and yet the language of Perrault is in a still higher strain: "There is more wit in these eighteen Letters than in Plato's Dia-

logues; more delicate and artful raillery than in those of Lucian; and more strength and ingenuity of reasoning than in the orations of Cicero." Their style especially is beyond all praise. It has "never been surpassed, nor perhaps equalled." There may be, as there is apt to be in all such concurrent verdicts, a strain of excess. The duller English sense may not catch all the finer edges of a style which it may yet feel to be exquisite in its general clearness, harmony, and point; the absurdities of verbal argument and of Jesuit sophistry may sometimes pall upon the attention, and hardly raise a smile at this time of day. It is the fate of even the finest polemical literature to grow dead as it grows old; yet none can doubt the immortality of the genius which has so long given life to such a controversy, and charmed so many of the highest judges of literary form. It is not for any Englishman to challenge the verdict of a Frenchman in a matter of style.

Pascal himself evidently thought highly of his success. He liked the controversy, its excitement, and the applausive echo which followed each Letter. Like every true artist, he felt the joy and yet the gravity of his work. He took up his pen with a pleasurable sense of mastery, and yet he wrote some of the Letters six or seven times over. He spared no pains, yet he never wearied. All his intellectual life for the time was thrown into the controversy, and his most finely-tempered strokes made music in his own mind, while they carried confusion to his adversaries and triumph to his friends. The sensation made by the Letters was, of course, mainly confined to France; but the nervous Latinity of Nicole soon communicated something of the same sensation to a wider

circle.[1] Pascal has himself told us that he never repented having written them, nor "the amusing, agreeable, ironical style" in which they were written. Even the condemnation of the Papal See, abject in some respects as was his devotion to his Church, did not move him on this point. He left on record, amongst his Thoughts, the following solemn declaration: "IF MY LETTERS ARE CONDEMNED IN ROME, WHAT I CONDEMN IN THEM IS CONDEMNED IN HEAVEN. AD TUUM, DOMINE JESU, TRIBUNAL APPELLO."

[1] Nicole's translation into Latin of the 'Provincial Letters,' in preparation for which he is said to have read repeatedly over all the plays of Terence, appeared at Cologne in 1658, about a year after their completion.

CHAPTER VI.

THE 'PENSÉES.'

FROM Pascal's finished work we turn to his unfinished Remains. The one will always be regarded as the chief monument of his literary skill, and of the executive completeness of his mind. But the other is the worthier and nobler tribute to the greatness of his soul, and the depth and power of his moral genius. Few comparatively now read the 'Provincial Letters' as a whole; fewer still are interested in the controversy which they commemorate. But there are hardly any of higher culture—none certainly of higher thoughtfulness—to whom the 'Pensées' are not still attractive, and who have not sought in them at one time or another some answer to the obstinate questionings which the deeper scrutiny of human life and destiny is ever renewing in the human heart. No answer may have been found in them, but every spiritual mind must have so far met in the author of the 'Pensées' a kindred spirit which, if it has seen no farther than others, has yet entered keenly upon the great quest, and traversed with a singular boldness the great lines of higher speculation that "slope through darkness up to God."

The literary history of the 'Pensées' is a very curious one. They first appeared in the end of 1669, in a small duodecimo volume, with the appropriate motto, "Pendent opera interrupta." Their preparation for the press had been a subject of much anxiety to Pascal's friends. What is known as the "Peace of the Church"—a period of temporary quiet and prosperity to Port Royal—had begun in 1663; and it was important that nothing should be done by the Port Royalists to disturb this peace. It had been agreed, therefore, that all passages bearing on the controversy with the Jesuits and the Formulary should be omitted; but beyond this Madame Périer desired that the volume should only contain what proceeded from her brother, and in the precise form and style in which it had left his hand. She evidently lacked full confidence in the Committee of Editors, of whom the Duc de Roannez was the chief, notwithstanding their professions of strict adherence to the manuscripts. The volume at last appeared, with a preface by her own son, and no fewer than nine "approbations," signed amongst others by three bishops, one archdeacon, and three doctors of the Sorbonne.

Unhappily Madame Périer had too much cause for alarm. Editors and Approvers alike had claimed the liberty, not only of arranging but of modifying both the matter and the style of the 'Pensées,' and this notwithstanding a statement in the preface that, in giving, as they professed to do, only "the clearest and most finished" of the fragments, they had given them as they found them, *without adding or changing anything.* "These fragments," says M. Faugère, "which sickness and death had left unfinished, suffered, without ceasing

to be immortal, all the mutilation which an exaggerated prudence or a misdirected zeal could suggest, with the view not only of guarding their orthodoxy, but of embellishing their style—the style of the author of the 'Provincials'!" "There are not," he adds, "twenty successive lines which do not present some alteration, great or small. As for total omissions and partial suppressions, they are without number." M. Cousin is equally emphatic. "There are," he says, "examples of every kind of alteration—alteration of words, alteration of phrases, suppressions, substitutions, additions, arbitrary compositions, and, what is worse, decompositions more arbitrary still."

It is impossible to defend the first editors of the 'Pensées.' But it should be remembered that their task was one not only of theological perplexity, but of great literary difficulty. Pascal's manuscripts were a mere mass of confused papers, sometimes written on both sides, and in a hand for the most part so obscure and imperfectly formed as to be illegible to all who had not made it a special study. The papers were pasted or bundled together without any natural connection, parts containing the same piece being sometimes intersected and sometimes widely separated from one another. If the editors, therefore, did their work ill, it was partly no doubt from incompetency, but partly from its inherent difficulty, and from the fact that being so near to Pascal they could hardly appreciate the feelings of the modern critic as to the sacredness of his style, and of all that came from his pen.

The edition of 1669 continued to be reprinted with little alteration for a century. Various additional frag-

ments were brought to light, especially the famous conversation between De Saci and Pascal regarding Epictetus and Montaigne; but the form of the fragments remained unchanged. It was not till the edition of Condorcet in 1776 that they can be said to have undergone any new *rédaction*. Unhappily Pascal suffered in the hands of the Encyclopedists, as he had previously suffered in the hands of the Jansenists and the Sorbonne. The first editors had expunged whatever might seem at variance with orthodoxy. Condorcet suppressed or modified whatever partook of a too lofty enthusiasm or a too fervent piety. It became a current idea among the Encyclopedists that the accident at Neuilly had affected Pascal's brain. We have already seen how Voltaire spoke of this; and he directed an early attack (1734) upon the doctrine of human nature contained in the 'Pensées.' Now, in his old age, he hailed Condorcet's edition, and reissued it two years later, with an Introduction and Notes by himself.

In the following year, 1779, appeared the elaborate and well-known edition of Pascal's works by the Abbé Bossut, accompanied by an admirable "Discours sur la Vie et les Ouvrages de Pascal." In this edition the remains are found for the first time in some degree of completeness. All the fragments published by Port Royal, and all those subsequently brought to light by Des Molets and others, are included and arranged in a new order. But meritorious as were Bossut's editorial labours as a whole, they did not attempt any restoration of the 'Pensées' to their original text; and even the new fragments published by him were not left untouched. He embodied, for example, the famous conversation with

De Saci, but without giving De Saci's part of the dialogue. In short, he reproduced, as M. Havet says, all the faults of the first editors, and made others of his own. This is the more remarkable that he is said to have had in his possession a copy of the original manuscripts. Condorcet, however, consulted the original manuscripts themselves, without any thought of doing justice to Pascal's text.

So matters remained till 1842, when M. Cousin published his famous Report on the subject to the French Academy. The French public then found to their astonishment that, with so many editions of the 'Pensées,' they had not the 'Pensées' themselves. While philosophers had disputed as to his ideas, and critics admired his style, the veritable Pascal of the 'Pensées' had all the time lain concealed in a mass of manuscripts in the National Library. Such a story, it may be imagined, did not lack any force in the manner in which M. Cousin told it; and an eager desire arose for a new and complete edition of the fragments. Cousin had prepared the way, but he did not himself undertake this task, which was reserved for M. Faugère, whose great edition appeared two years later, in 1844. Nothing can deprive M. Faugère of the credit of being the first editor of a *complete* and *authentic* text of the 'Pensées.'

Other editions of distinctive merit have since appeared; and it may be admitted that, in the natural reaction from the laxity of former editions, he gave a too literal transcript of the manuscripts, including some things of little importance, and others more properly belonging to an edition of the 'Provincial Letters' than of the 'Pensées.' But, whether it be the result of early association or of

greater familiarity with M. Faugère's pages, I own still a preference for this edition, while admitting the admirable perspicuity and intelligence of many of M. Havet's notes, and the splendour of the edition of M. Victor Rochet, the most recent (1873) which has come under my notice.

The principle observed by M. Faugère is strongly defended in his preface. He allowed himself no discretionary powers of emendation, because "the limits of such a power might," he says, "be too easily overstepped, and would have left room for belief that greater liberties had been taken than was actually the case. The manuscripts, he adds, "have been read, or rather studied, page by page, line by line, syllable by syllable, to the end; and, with the exception of illegible words (which, however, are carefully indicated), they have passed completely into the present edition."

So far, this principle has been adhered to by subsequent editors. There has been no further tampering with Pascal's words, but more or less latitude has been taken in publishing all the manuscript details, and especially in the arrangement of the several fragments. Faugère fancied that he could trace in Pascal's own notes the indication of an interior arrangement, into which the several parts of his proposed work in defence of religion were intended to fall; and he has grouped the fragments in his second volume according to these supposed indications. M. Havet does not think that it is possible any longer to discover the true order of the fragments. He does not believe that any such order existed in the author's own mind. He had a general design, and certain great divisions; a preface was sketched

here, and a chapter there; but in throwing his thoughts upon paper as they presented themselves to him, he did not stop to assort them, or to bring them into any fitting connection. What Pascal himself did not do, M. Havet does not think it possible any editor can do. Accordingly, he recurs to the old, if somewhat arbitrary, arrangement of Bossut, as the most familiar and useful. M. Rochet follows an elaborate arrangement, professedly founded on the original plan of Pascal, as sketched by himself in the conversation reported by his nephew in the preface to the primary edition of the fragments. He considers that all the Thoughts find their natural place in this plan and in no other. But M. Rochet's classifications are, partly at least, inspired by his own ecclesiastical tendencies; and he is far from just to the labours of M. Faugère, and the real light and order which these labours introduced into the development of Pascal's ideas.

It is unnecessary for us to attempt to hold the balance between Pascal's several editors, or to say which of them has most justice on his side. Of two things there can be no doubt: first, that any special arrangement of the 'Pensées,' so as to give the idea of a connected book in defence of religion, is, so far, arbitrary—the work, that is to say, of the editor rather than of the author; and secondly, that there is no difficulty, from the original preface and otherwise, of gathering the general order of Pascal's ideas, and the method which appeared to him the true one of meeting the irreligion of his day, and vindicating the divine truth of Christianity—points which shall afterwards come before us.

The special question raised by M. Cousin as to Pas-

cal's scepticism will also be best discussed in its true order, in connection with such passages as have suggested it. Considering Pascal's traditionary reputation as the defender of religion, there was a character of surprise in this question, that forced a lively debate, as soon as it was raised, in France and Germany, and even England. Vinet and Neander both joined in it; and the two lectures delivered by the latter before the Royal Academy of Sciences in Berlin in 1847, are highly deserving of perusal by all students of philosophy.[1] But the issue is an absurd one, before the combatants are agreed as to the meaning of the word Scepticism, and before the reader has before him the views of Pascal, and the manner in which he defines his own attitude in relation to what he considered the two great lines of thought opposed to Christianity. When we are in possession of his own statements, we may find that much of the indignant rhetoric of M. Cousin is beside the question, and that, although Pascal was certainly no Cartesian, and has used some strong and rash expressions about the weakness of human reason, neither is he a sceptic in any usual sense. He has, in fact, defined his own position with singular clearness and force.

But before turning to his views on these higher subjects, it will be well to present our readers with some of Pascal's more miscellaneous and general Thoughts. In doing so, it is not necessary, in such a volume as this, that we indicate throughout the edition from which we take our quotations. We shall quote from the editions of

[1] These lectures will be found, translated by the writer of the present volume, in Kitto's Journal of Sacred Literature, April-October, 1849.

Faugère or Havet, as may be most convenient, and take them in such order as suits our own purpose of exhibiting Pascal's mind as clearly as we can. For the same reason, we shall give such passages as appear to us not always the most just or accurate in thought, but the most characteristic or representative of the veritable Pascal, whose true words were so long concealed from the world. We cannot do better, in the first instance, than note what so great a mathematician has to say of geometry and the "mathematical mind," compared with the naturally *acute* mind ("l'esprit de finesse"), betwixt which he draws an interesting parallel. The fragment on the "Mathematical" or "Geometric Mind" was, with the exception of a brief passage given by Des Molets[1] in 1728, originally published, although with numerous suppressions, in Condorcet's edition of the 'Pensées.' It appeared for the first time in its complete form, and under its proper title, in Faugère's edition, along with its natural pendant, the closely-allied fragment, entitled "L'Art de Persuader." We give a few passages from the first fragment:—

"We may have three principal objects in the study of truth—one to discover it when we seek it, another to demonstrate it when we possess it, and a third and last to discriminate it from the false when we examine it. . . . Geometry excels in all three, and especially in the art of discovering unknown truths, which it calls *analysis*. . . . There is a method which excels geometry, but is impossible to man, *for whatever transcends geometry transcends us* [in natural science, as he explains elsewhere]. This is the method of defining everything and proving everything. . . . A fine method, but impossible; since it is evident that the first

[1] In his Mémoires de Littérature et d'Histoire.

terms that we wish to define, suppose precedent terms necessary for their explanation—and that the first propositions that we wish to prove, suppose others which precede them; and so it is clear we can never arrive at absolutely first principles. In pushing our researches to the utmost, we necessarily reach primitive words that admit of no further definition, and principles so obvious, that they require no proof. Man can never, therefore, from natural incompetency, possess an absolutely complete science. . . . But geometry, while inferior in its aims, is absolutely certain within its limits. It neither defines everything, nor attempts to prove everything, and must, so far, yield its pretension to be an absolute science; but it sets out from things universally admitted as clear and constant, and is therefore perfectly true, because in consonance with nature. Its function is not to define things universally clear and understood, but to define all others; and not to attempt to prove things intuitively known to men, but to attempt to prove all others. Against this, the true order of knowledge, those alike err who attempt to define and to prove everything, and those who neglect definition and demonstration where things are not self-evident. This is what geometry teaches perfectly. It attempts no definition of such things as *space, time, motion, number, equality,* and the like, because these terms designate so naturally the things which they signify, that any attempt at making them more clear ends in making them more obscure. For there is nothing more futile than the talk of those who would define primitive words.[1]

. . . . . .

"In geometry the principles are palpable, but removed from common use. . . . In the sphere of natural wit or acuteness, the principles are in common use and before all eyes—it is only a question of having a good view of them; for they are so subtle and numerous, that some are almost sure to escape observation. . . . All geometers would be men of acuteness if they had sufficient insight, for they

[1] Faugère, i. pp. 123-129.

never reason falsely on the principles recognised by them. All fine or acute spirits would be geometers if they could fix their thoughts on the unwonted principles of geometry. The reason why some finer spirits are not geometers is, that they cannot turn their attention at all to the principles of geometry; but geometers fail in finer perception, because they do not see all that is before them, and being accustomed to the plain and palpable principles of geometry, and never reasoning until they have well ascertained and handled their principles, they lose themselves in matters of intellectual subtlety, where the principles are not so easily laid hold of. Such things are seen with difficulty; they are felt rather than seen. They are so delicate and multitudinous that it requires a very delicate and neat sense to appreciate them. . . . So it is as rare for geometers to be men of subtle wit as it is for the latter to be geometers, because geometers like to treat these nicer matters geometrically, and so make themselves ridiculous; they like to commence with definition, and then go on to principles—a mode which does not at all suit this sort of reasoning. It is not that the mind does not take this method, but it does so silently, naturally, and without conscious art. The perception of the process belongs only to a few minds, and those of the highest order. . . . Geometers, who are only geometers, are sure to be right, provided the subject come within their scope, and is capable of explanation by definition and principles. Otherwise they go wrong altogether, for they only judge rightly upon principles clearly set forth and established. On the other hand, subtle men, who are only subtle, lack patience, in matters of speculation and imagination, to reach first principles which they have never known in the world, and which are entirely beyond their beat. . . .

"There are different kinds of sound sense. Some succeed in one order of things, and not in another, in which they are simply extravagant. . . . Some minds draw consequences well from a few principles, others are more at home in drawing conclusions from a great variety of principles. For example, some understand well the phenomena of water, with

reference to which the principles are few, but the results extremely delicate, so that only very great accuracy of mind can trace them. Such men would probably not be great geometers, because geometry involves a multitude of principles, and because the mind which may penetrate thoroughly a few principles to their depth may not be at all able to penetrate things which combine a multitude of principles. . . . There are two sorts of mind: the one fathoms rapidly and deeply the consequences of principles—this is the observant and accurate mind; the other embraces a great multitude of principles, without confounding them—and this is the mathematical mind. The one is marked by energy and accuracy, the other by amplitude. But the one may exist without the other. The mind may be powerful and narrow, or it may be ample and weak." [1]

Few of Pascal's Thoughts are more interesting than those on "Eloquence and Style." So great a master of the art of expression had naturally something to say on these subjects.

"Continued eloquence wearies. Princes and kings amuse themselves sometimes; they are not always upon their thrones—they tire of these. Grandeur must be laid aside in order to be realised.

"Eloquence is a picture of thought; and thus those who, after having drawn a picture, still go on, make a tableau and not a likeness.

"Eloquence is the art of saying things in such a manner—first, that those to whom they are addressed can understand them without trouble and with pleasure; and secondly, that they may be interested in them in such a way that their *amour propre* may lead them gladly to reflect upon them. It consists, therefore, in a correspondence established between the mind and heart of the hearers on the one side, and the

[1] Faugère, i. pp. 149-152.

thoughts and expressions used on the other, and so implies a close study of the human heart in order to know all its springs, and to find the due measures of speech to address to it. It must confine itself, as far as possible, to the simplicity of nature, and not make great what is small, nor small what is great. It is not enough that a thing be fine, it must be fitting,—neither in excess nor defect."

"Eloquence should prevail by gentle suasion, not by constraint. It should reign, not tyrannise.

"There are some who speak well, and who do not write well. The place—the assembly—excites them, and draws forth their mind more than they ever experience without such excitement."

"Those who make antitheses by forcing the sense are like men who make false windows for the sake of symmetry. Their rule is not to speak correctly, but to make correct figures."

"There should be in eloquence always what is true and real; but that which is pleasing should itself be the real."

"When we meet with the natural style we are surprised and delighted, for we expected to find an author, and we find a man; whilst those of good taste who in looking into a book think to find a man, are altogether surprised to find an author. *Plus poetice quam humane locutus es.* They humour nature most who learn from her that she can speak best on all subjects—even on theology."

"There are men who always dress up nature. No mere king with them, but an august monarch. No Paris, but the capital of the kingdom. There are places in which it is necessary to call Paris Paris; others, where we must call it the capital of the kingdom."

"When in composition we find a word repeated, and on trying to correct it find it so suitable that a change would spoil the sense, it is better to let it alone. This stamps it as fitting, and it is a stupid feeling which does not recognise that repetition in such a case is not a fault; for there is no universal rule.

"The meaning itself changes with the words which ex-

press it. The meaning derives its dignity from the words, instead of imparting it to them."

"The last thing that we discover in writing a book is to know what to put at the beginning.

"When a discourse paints a passion or effect naturally, we find in ourselves the truth of what we hear, and which was there without our knowing it, so that we are led to like the man who discovers so much to us. For he does not show us his own good, but ours; and this good turn makes him lovable. Besides that, the community of intelligence we have with him necessarily inclines the heart towards him.

"Let none allege that I have said nothing new. The arrangement of the matter is new. When we play at tennis, both play with the same ball; but one plays better than the other. They might as well accuse me of using old words, as if the same thoughts differently arranged would not form a different discourse; just as the same words differently arranged express different thoughts.

"There is a definite standard of taste and beauty, which consists in a certain relation between our nature—it may be weak or strong, but such as it is—and the thing that pleases us. All that is formed to this standard delights us,—house, song, writing, verse, prose, women, buds, rivers, trees, rooms, dress, &c. All that is not formed by this standard disgusts men of good taste.

"I never judge of the same thing exactly in the same manner. I cannot judge of my work in the course of doing it. I must do as painters do, place myself at a distance from it, but not too far. How then? You may guess."

We do not look to Pascal especially for worldly insight, or for that sharp knowledge of men that make the sayings of clever social writers like Rochefoucauld or Horace Walpole memorable, if not always wise or kind. But there are many of the Thoughts which show that the penitent of Port Royal had looked with clear observant eyes below the surface of Paris society, and that he had

a deep sense not only of the moral but social weaknesses of humanity.

"When passion bears us towards anything, we forget duty. When we like a book, we read it when we ought to be doing something else. To awaken self-recollection, it is necessary to propose to do something that we dislike; then we excuse ourselves that we have something else to do, and so again forget our duty in this manner.

"How wisely are men distinguished by their exterior rather than by their interior qualifications! Which of us two shall take the lead? Which shall yield precedence? The man of less talent? But I am as clever as he. Then we must fight it out. But he has four lackeys and I have only one. That is a visible difference. We have only to count the numbers. It is my place then to give way, and I am a fool to contest the point. In this way peace is kept, which is the greatest of blessings.

"There is a great advantage in rank, which gives to a man of eighteen or twenty a degree of acceptance, publicity, and respect which another can hardly obtain by merit at fifty. It is a gain of thirty years without any trouble.

"Respect for others requires you to inconvenience yourself. This seems foolish, yet it is very proper. It seems to say, I would gladly inconvenience myself if you really required me to do so, seeing I am ready to do so without serving you.

"'This is *my* dog,' say children; 'that sunny seat is mine.' There is the beginning and type of the usurpation of the whole earth.

"This *I* is hateful. You, Miton,[1] merely cover it, you do not take it away; you are therefore always hateful. Not at all, you say; for if we act obligingly to all men, they have no reason to hate us. So far true, if there was nothing hateful in the *I* itself but the displeasure which it gives. But if I hate it because it is essentially unjust, because it makes itself the centre of everything, I shall hate it always.

[1] See p. 66.

In short, this *I* has two qualities: it is unjust in itself, in that it makes itself the centre of everything; it is an annoyance to others, in that it would serve itself by them. Each *I* is the enemy, and would be the tyrant, of all others.

"He who would thoroughly know the vanity of men has only to consider the causes and effects of love. The cause is a *je ne sais quoi*, an indefinable trifle—the effects are monstrous. If the nose of Cleopatra had been a little shorter, it would have changed the history of the world.

"You have a bad manner—'excuse me, if you please.' Without the apology I should not have known that there was any harm done. Begging your pardon, the 'excuse me,' is all the mischief.

"Do you wish men to speak well of you? Then never speak well of yourself.

"The more mind we have, the more do we observe men of original mind. It is your commonplace people that find no difference betwixt one man and another.

"It is the contest that delights us, and not the victory. It is the same in play, and the same in search for truth. We love to watch in argument the conflicts of opinion; but the plain truth we do not care to look at. To regard it with pleasure, we must see it gradually emerging from the contest of debate. It is the same with passions: the struggle of two contending passions has great interest, but the dominance of one is mere brutality.

"The example of chastity in Alexander has not availed in the same degree to make men chaste, as his drunkenness has to make them intemperate. Men are not ashamed not to be so virtuous as he; and it seems excusable not to be more vicious. A man thinks he is not altogether sunk in the mud when he follows the vices of great men.

"I have spent much time in the study of the abstract sciences, but the paucity of persons with whom you can communicate on such subjects, gave me a distaste for them. When I began to study man, I saw that these abstract studies are not suited to him, and that in diving into them I wandered farther from my real object than those who were igno-

rant of them, and I forgave men for not having attended to these things. But I thought at least I should find many companions in the study of mankind, which is the true and proper study of man. I was mistaken. There are yet fewer students of man than of geometry.

"People in general are called neither poets nor geometers, although they have all that in them, and are capable of being judges of it. They are not specifically marked out. When they enter a room, they speak of the subject on hand. They do not show a greater aptitude for one subject than another, except as circumstances call out their talents. . . .

"It is poor praise when a man is pointed out on entering a room as being a clever poet; a bad mark that he should only be referred to when the question is as to the merit of some verses. . . .

"Man is full of wants, and likes those who can satisfy them. 'Such a one is a good mathematician,' it may be said. But then I must be doing mathematics; he would turn me into a proposition. Another is a good soldier; he would take me for a besieged place. Give me your true man of general talents, who can adapt himself to all my needs.

"If a man sets himself at a window to see the passers-by, and I happen to pass, can I say that he set himself there to see me? No; for he does not think of me in particular. But if a man loves a woman for her beauty, does he love *her?* No; for the smallpox, which will destroy her beauty without killing her, will cause him to love her no more. And if any one loves me for my judgment or my memory, does he really love *me?* No; for I may lose those qualities without ceasing to be. Where, then, is this *me*, if it is neither in soul nor body?

"How is it that a lame man does not anger us, but a blundering mind does? Is it that the cripple admits that we walk straight, but a crippled mind accuses us of limping? Epictetus asks also; Why are we not annoyed if any one tells us that we are unwell in the head, and yet are angry if they tell us that we reason falsely or choose unwisely? The reason is, that we know certainly nothing ails our head, or that

we are not crippled in body. But we are not so certain that we have chosen correctly.

"All men naturally hate one another.

"Desire and force are the source of all our actions—desire of our voluntary, force of our involuntary actions.

"Men are necessarily such fools, that it would be folly of another kind not to be a fool.

"To make a man a saint, grace is absolutely necessary; and whoever doubts this does not know what a saint is, nor what a man is.

"The last act is always tragedy, whatever fine comedy there may have been in the rest of life—We must all die alone."

"There are two kinds of men: the righteous, who believe themselves sinners; and sinners, who believe themselves righteous.

"Unbelievers are very credulous: they believe the miracles of Vespasian, but not those of Moses.

"Atheists must pronounce things perfectly clear, but it is not perfectly clear that the soul is material.

"Atheism indicates force of mind, but only up to a certain point."

Some of the foregoing Thoughts may appear to our readers sufficient to warrant the charge of scepticism, already adverted to. Pascal certainly speaks at times both of human life and human reason in a contemptuous manner. Even Rochefoucauld could hardly express himself more bitterly than he does now and then when he fixes his clear gaze upon the folly, the vanity, the weaknesses which make up man's customary life, and the deceits which he practises upon himself and his fellows. All the world seems to him at such times "in a state of delusion." If there is truth, it "is not where men suppose it to be." The majority are to be followed, not "because they have more reason, but because they have more force."

"The power of kings is founded on the reason and on the folly of the people, but chiefly on their folly. The greatest and most important thing in the world has weakness for its basis, and the basis is wonderfully secure, for there is nothing more certain than that people will be weak. . . . Our magistrates well understand this mystery. . . . Save for their crimson robes, ermine, palaces of justice, fleur-de-lis, they would never have duped the world. Where would the physician be without his 'cassock and mule,' and the theologian without his 'square cap and flowing garments'? These vain adornments impress the imagination, and secure respect. We cannot look at an advocate in his gown and wig without a favourable impression of his abilities. The soldier alone needs no disguise, because he gains his authority by actual force, the others by grimace."

In such sentences, as well as in some previously quoted, the cynicism of both Hobbes and Montaigne seems to speak. Man is really a fool, and society rests upon force. The further down we go, we come, not to any natural rights, or essential principles of justice, which reason is capable of judging, but only to a mass of customs built up out of selfish instincts, and controlled by external influence. Pascal repeats Montaigne over and over again, and seems to make many of his cynicisms his own. This is not to be denied. "Montaigne is right. Custom should be followed because it is custom, and because it is found to be established, without inquiry whether it be reasonable or not." Yet he puts in a caveat, as we shall see more fully afterwards, just when he seems most to have identified himself with the representative of scepticism. In blindly following custom, he reserves "those matters which are not contrary to natural or divine right;" and the root of custom, even in the popular mind, he believes to be a dim sense of justice. Again, in a similar vein,

he asks, "Why follow ancient laws and ancient opinions? *Are they wiser? No.* But they stand apart from present interests; and *thus take away the root of difference.*" Here, as so often, the moralist supplants the sceptic, and suggests a higher thought, while seeming to approve of a superficial Pyrrhonism.

It is easy, in one sense, to make out a case of scepticism against Pascal. He always writes strongly. There is passion in all his thought. He had a strong and deep sense of human weakness, and incapacity to attain the highest truth. He spoke of the philosophy of Descartes without respect. With most of the Port Royalists, indeed, he seems to have concurred in the Cartesian doctrine of automata,[1] strangely revived in our day by Professor Huxley. But he repudiated the notion

[1] The following passage from Fontaine's Memoirs, quoted by Cousin (B. Pascal, p. 132), gives an interesting and lively glimpse of the philosophical discourses at Port Royal. It may not be without some application to the modern no less than the original Cartesian doctrine. "How many little agitations raised themselves in this desert touching the human science of philosophy and the new opinions of M. Descartes! As M. Arnauld in his hours of relaxation conversed on these subjects with his more intimate friends, the excitement spread on every side, and the solitude, in the hours of social intercourse, resounded with these discussions. There was hardly a solitary who did not talk of 'automata.' To beat a dog was no longer a matter of any moment. The stick was laid on with the utmost indifference, and a great fool was made of those who pitied the animals, *as if they had any feeling.* They said they were only clockwork, and that the cries they uttered when they were beaten were no more than the noise of some little spring that had been moved, and that all this involved no sensation. They raised the poor animals upon boards by the fore-paws, in order to dissect them while still alive, and to see the circulation of the blood, which was a great subject of discussion. The chateau of the Duc de Luynes was the source of all these curious inquiries, and a source that was inexhaustible. There they talked incessantly, and with admiration, of the new system of the world according to M. Descartes."

of "subtle matter," and even spoke of it with contempt (*dont il se moquait fort*). "He could not bear," his niece tells us, in a passage often quoted and emphasised, "the Cartesian manner of explaining the formation of all things." "I cannot forgive Descartes," he said. "He would willingly in all his philosophy have done without God, if he could; but he could not get on without letting him give the world a fillip to set it agoing: after that, he has nothing more to do with God." Whether he had studied Descartes or not, he evidently did not share the enthusiasm of Arnauld and others for his philosophy. He even spoke of it as "useless, uncertain, and troublesome — nay, as ridiculous."[1] He has added, in that brusque, rapid, forceful style characteristic of many of his Thoughts, that "he did not think the whole of philosophy worth an hour's trouble." Again: "To set light by philosophy is the true philosophy." When we look at such expressions, and many others, it is not to be wondered at that Pascal has been accused of scepticism. As he could not forgive Descartes, so Cousin cannot forgive him for his depreciation of Descartes. One who saw nothing in Cartesianism or philosophy in general beyond what these rash sentences, freshly restored in all their audacity, declare, could be nothing but an "enemy of all philosophy."

It is impossible not to feel that there is some ground for this accusation, and that, if we were to draw our knowledge of Pascal merely from such passages, Cousin makes out something of a case against him. But many other passages, hardly less emphatic, must make every candid reader pause before he comes to any definite con-

[1] Fragment sur la Philosophie de Descartes.

clusion on the subject, if it is necessary to come to such a conclusion at all. It must never be forgotten that we have nowhere the complete mind of Pascal; that it was of the very nature of thoughts rapidly dashed upon paper—as the very form of many we have quoted clearly indicates they were—to be one-sided and often extravagant. Pascal, of all men, is not to be measured by his strong expressions. His intellectual nature, while profound, was narrow and intense. He put his whole soul into what moved him for the time; and a certain excess of passionate intellectual emotion evidently speaks in some of the most striking of the 'Pensées.' We may imagine how in some — perhaps in many — cases they would have been toned down had he lived to revise and refashion them into a harmonious whole. That interior elaboration,—"a kind of second creation of genius," as M. Faugère says—which no one else may venture upon, —would undoubtedly have come from his own masterly hand, if it had been given him to bring fragment to fragment, and to fit them together into a complete fabric. It would be a hard thing to judge any student, and especially a student like Pascal, by the scattered notes of his library table; and precious as these fragments are, we must remember that this is their character, and nothing else. The fact that we now have them in all their native *hardiesse* makes this caution not the less but all the more necessary.

In passing on to consider more particularly Pascal's philosophical and religious attitude, we shall see more fully the bearing of these remarks. Pascal, in point of fact, embraces many points of view; and, if he leans sometimes to scepticism, he sees also the strong side of

what he calls dogmatism or rational philosophy. The very exaggerations of his language, now on this side and now on that, show that he himself is more than either, as his own words bear. "It is necessary," he says, "to have three qualities — those of the Pyrrhonist, of the geometrician (the dogmatist), and of the humble Christian. These unite with and attemper one another, so that we doubt when we should, we aim at certainty when we should, and we submit when we should." He certainly thought that he had found a surer road to truth than either Dogmatism or Pyrrhonism. Whether he succeeded in doing so will appear as we proceed.

The famous conversation with De Saci, when he entered Port Royal, must be taken as the chief key to Pascal's own philosophical attitude. There is nowhere in any of the Thoughts so complete an exhibition of his point of view; and all the editors who have most entered into Pascal's spirit — Sainte-Beuve, Faugère, and Havet alike—have recognised its importance. It is really, as Havet says, of the nature of an introduction to the 'Pensées.'

In this conversation Pascal signalises what he believes to be the two great opposing systems of human philosophy at all times; the rational, dogmatic, or Stoical, on the one hand—the sceptical, or Epicurean, on the other. He takes Epictetus as the representative of the one; Montaigne as the representative of the other. In depicting dogmatism at other times, he seems to have Descartes especially in view; but in speaking of scepticism and Pyrrhonism (which is his own expression), it is always Montaigne that he has before him. Montaigne is Pyrrhonist *par excellence;* and undoubtedly

the famous Essays had greatly fascinated Pascal, like many others in his generation. He was constantly drawn to them as embodying one, and that a deep, phase of his own experience. He felt his own thought expressed in many pages of Montaigne, and had that favour for the Essays that every thoughtful man has for the book that makes his own experience alive, and brings it clearly before him. But he has, at the same time, made plainly intelligible his own differences from Montaigne, and marked with his usual boldness the limitations of his thought. If Pascal is Pyrrhonist, he is certainly not Pyrrhonist after the manner of Montaigne, deeply as he responds to many of the notes of the Essays, and at times seems to make them his own.

The conversation with De Saci took place in 1654, when Pascal first went to Port Royal des Champs, and De Saci became his spiritual director. We owe its preservation to Fontaine, from whose manuscript 'Memoirs' it was extracted, and first published in 1728 by Des Molets. After all the labour of Faugère, Havet believes himself to have given for the first time the correct text of the conversation from the original print of Des Molets, based on Fontaine's manuscripts, rather than from the text of the 'Memoirs' as afterwards published. Fontaine describes in his *naïve* manner the impression made by Pascal upon De Saci, and how the brilliancy of power which had charmed all the world could not be hidden within the shades of Port Royal. Ignorant of the Fathers of the Church, he had found by his own mental and spiritual penetration the very truths to be met with in them; and De Saci seemed to see another St Augustine before him in the wonderful talk of the gifted penitent.

It was his practice in dealing with his penitents to adapt his conversation to their peculiar powers. If he spoke with M. Champagne, for example, he talked with him of painting. If he saw M. Hamon, he inquired about the art of medicine. If it was the surgeon of the place, he had something to say of surgery. All was designed to lead the thoughts from all human things up to God. With Pascal, therefore, it was philosophy upon which his conversation fell, to try the depths of his mind, and see what special direction he needed. "Pascal told him that the two books most familiar to him were Epictetus and Montaigne, and he lavished great praise on both. M. de Saci had always wished to read these two authors, and asked M. Pascal to explain them fully."

"Epictetus," said Pascal, "is one of the philosophers of the world who have best known the duties of man. Above all things, he would have man regard God as his chief object —to be persuaded that He governs all things with righteousness—to submit to Him cordially, and to follow Him willingly, as having made all things with perfect wisdom. Such a disposition would stay all complaints and murmurs, and prepare the human mind to bear quietly the most troublesome events. 'Never say,' he observes (Enchirid. 11), 'I have lost that; say rather, I have restored it. My son is dead; I have surrendered him. My wife is dead; I have given her up.' And so of every other good. . . . While its use is permitted, regard it as a good belonging to others, as a traveller does in an inn. 'You should not wish,' he adds, 'that things be as you desire, but you should desire them to be as they are.' . . . It is your duty to play well the part assigned to you, but to choose the part is the act of Another. Have always death before your eyes, and the evils which are least supportable, and you would never think meanly of anything, nor desire anything in excess. He shows in a thousand ways what is the duty of man. He wishes him to be humble,

to conceal his good resolutions, especially in their beginnings, that he may carry them out in secret. Nothing is so ruinous to them as publicity. He never ceases to repeat that the whole duty and desire of man ought to be to acknowledge the will of God, and to follow it.

"Such were the lights of this great mind, who has so well understood the duties of man. I venture to say, that he would have deserved to be adored if he had only known as well human weakness; but in order to do this, he must have been God Himself. Mere man as he was, after having so well explained human duty, he loses himself in the presumption of human capacity. He avers that God has given to every man the means of acquitting himself of all his obligations; that such means are always within his own power, that happiness is to be sought by things within our reach, since God has given us them for this very end. He points out in what our freedom consists: goods, life, esteem are not in our power, and therefore do not lead to God; but none can force the mind to believe what is false, nor the will to love that which will make it miserable. These two powers are therefore free; and by these we can render ourselves perfect—know God perfectly, love Him, obey Him, please Him—vanquish all vices, acquire all virtues, and so make ourselves holy, and the fellows of God. These principles, truly diabolic in their pride, lead to other errors—such as that the soul is a portion of the Divine substance, that grief and death are not evils, that we may kill ourselves when we are in such trouble that we may believe God summons us, &c.

"As for Montaigne—of whom you wish me also, my dear sir, to speak—being born in a Christian country, he makes profession of the Catholic religion, and so far there is nothing peculiar about him. But in the search for a system of morals dictated by reason without the light of faith, he has to lay down his principles on this supposition, and to consider man apart from revelation. He conceives things in such a universal uncertainty that doubt itself is seized with uncertainty, and doubts whether it doubts. His scepticism returns upon itself in a perpetual circle without

repose, opposing equally those who maintain that all is uncertain, and those who maintain that nothing is, so utterly indisposed is he to any fixity. In this doubt which doubts itself, and this ignorance which is ignorant of itself, is to be found the essence of his thought. He cannot express it by any positive term; for if he was to say that he doubts, he betrays himself by making it certain that he doubts; and this being formally against his intention, he can only explain himself by an interrogation. Not wishing to say, I do not know, he can only ask, What do I know? He has made this his device, putting it under a pair of balances, which, weighed in each scale, by a contradiction hangs in perfect equilibrium. In other words, he is pure Pyrrhonist. This is the point round which turn all his discourses and all his essays. This is the only thing which he leaves fixed, although he may not always keep it before him. . . .

"It is in this humour, fluctuating and variable as it is, that he combats with an invincible firmness the heretics of his time, who assumed to know the exclusive sense of Scripture. From the same point of view he thunders vigorously against the horrible impiety of those who dare to be certain that there is no God! He attacks them especially in the 'Apology for Raymond de Sebonde.' Having voluntarily set aside revelation, and abandoned themselves to their natural light —all faith set aside—he asks them on what authority they, who know not the essential reality of anything, dare to judge of that Sovereign Being who is infinite by His very definition. He demands upon what principles they rest, and presses them to point them out. He examines all that they bring forward, and so searches them by his wonderful penetration as to show the hollowness of what passes for the most clear and established truths. He inquires if the soul knows anything whatever—if it knows itself; whether it is substance or accident, body or spirit; what is each of these things, and if there is anything belonging to some order different from either; if the soul knows its own body; if it knows what matter is, or can distinguish the innumerable varieties of

body produced from matter; how it can reason if it is material, and how it can be united to a special body, and feel its passions if it be spiritual. When did it begin to be, with the body or before, and if it ends with it or not? . . . The ideas of God and truth are inseparable, and if the one is or is not, if the one is certain or uncertain, the other is necessarily the same. Who knows if the common sense (*le sens commun*) which we take as a judge of the truth is really this, designed for such a purpose? Who knows what truth is, and how can we be sure of having it without knowing it? Who knows even what Being is, since it is impossible to define it; and in trying to do so, it is necessary to presuppose the very idea itself, and say *it is?* . . .

"I confess, sir, I might look with joy upon the manner in which the author invincibly crumples up proud reason with its own arms. I could love with my whole heart the minister of so mighty a vengeance if, as a faithful disciple of the Church, he had followed its moral guidance. But he acts, on the contrary, like a pagan, concluding that we ought to abandon care for others and dwell in peace, gliding lightly over such subjects lest we lose ourselves in them, and taking that to be true and good which at first appears to be so. This is why he follows everywhere the evidence of the senses and the notions of the community. . . . In this manner, he says, there is nothing extravagant in his conduct. He does as others do. Whatever they do in the foolish thought that they are following the true good, he does from another principle, that as the probabilities (*vraisemblances*) are equally on one side and the other, so example and convenience carry the day with him. He mounts his horse like any one else—not as a philosopher—because the horse allows him to do so, but without thinking there is any right in the matter, and not knowing whether the horse, on the contrary, may not be entitled to make use of him. He puts constraint to himself in order to shun certain vices; and even guards marriage faithfully, merely on account of the disorder which would otherwise follow. . . .

"I cannot dissemble that in reading Montaigne, and com-

paring him with Epictetus, I find in them the two greatest defenders of the most celebrated sects of the world, who profess to follow reason rather than revelation. We must follow one or other. Either there is a God and a Sovereign Good, or this is uncertain, and all is uncertain,—whether there is any true good or not. . . .

"The error in both is, in not seeing that the present state of man differs from that in which he was created. The one, observing only the traces of his primitive grandeur, and ignoring his corruption, has treated human nature as if it were whole, without any need of a Redeemer—this leads to the height of pride; the other, sensible of man's present misery, and ignorant of his original dignity, treats human nature as necessarily weak and irreparable, and thus, in despair of attaining any true good, plunges it into a depth of baseness."[1]

These two states, Pascal goes on to argue, must be taken together before the truth can be reached. Apart, they give a false picture of man; and generate on the one hand pride, on the other hand immorality. It is only the Gospel which unites them, in a right manner, "by a divine art." It brings together the opposites, and explains, by a wondrous, truly heavenly way, how they may coexist, not as attributes of the same subject, as systems of human philosophy have made them, but as different endowments—the one of nature, the other of grace. "Behold the new and surprising union which God alone could teach and alone accomplish, and which is only an image and an effect of the ineffable union of two natures in the one person of the God-man."

In these latter sentences—which we have been obliged, for the sake of brevity, to compress—we have the suggestion of Pascal's philosophy both of human nature and

[1] Havet, i. pp. cxxiv-cxxxiii

of Divine revelation. He recurs over and over again to the same idea, that man is great and yet weak, full of capacity and yet miserable, and that the Gospel alone holds the key to this enigma of human nature. This, more than any other, is the pervading thought round which all the others gather.

"This twofoldness (*duplicité*)," he says, "is so visible, that some have conceived that man must have two souls—a simple subject appearing to them incapable of such and so sudden variations; an immeasurable presumption on the one hand, a horrible abasement on the other. In spite of all the miseries which cleave to us, and hold us, as it were, by the throat (*nous tiennent à la gorge*), there is within us an irrepressible instinct which exalts us. The greatness of man is so visible that it may be deduced from his very misery. His very miseries prove his greatness. They are the miseries of a great lord, of a dethroned sovereign. The greatness of man consists in his knowledge of his misery. A tree does not know itself to be miserable. . . . He is miserable—the fact is beyond question; but he is great in knowing it." [1]

Again, reverting to the very same line of thought, as in the conversation with De Saci—

"Philosophers have propounded sentiments not at all adapted to the twofold condition of man. They have sought to inspire emotions of pure greatness; but this is not man's condition. They have sought on the other hand to inspire sentiments of mere baseness; but neither is this man's condition. Man needs abasement, not of nature, however, but of penitence; not that he remain degraded, but that he may rise to greatness. He needs to feel within him the emotion of greatness,—not of merit, however, but of grace. . . . Two sects have sprung out of this conflict between reason and sense in man. The one, in renouncing passion, has aspired to

[1] Faugère, ii. pp. 81, 82.

divinity; the other, in renouncing reason, has sunk to mere brutality. . . . The principles of the respective philosophies are so far true—Pyrrhonism, Stoicism, Atheism even. But the conclusions are false, because the opposite principles are equally true. . . . We labour under an incapacity of demonstrating all things invincible to Dogmatism. We have an innate idea of truth invincible to all Pyrrhonism. . . . Nature confounds the Pyrrhonist, and reason the Dogmatist;"—

or, as the passage was originally written,—

"We cannot be Pyrrhonists without violating nature; we cannot be Dogmatists without renouncing nature."[1]

These and other passages sufficiently show Pascal's relation to philosophy, and to Pyrrhonism in particular. He is no enemy of philosophy, but he certainly does not believe it capable of explaining the riddle of human nature. He is so far from being a Pyrrhonist in the sense of resting on Pyrrhonism, that he seeks to mount on its shoulders to a higher truth. Nay, he clearly recognises that man has an inborn faculty for truth which not all the contradictions of his experience can belie. We may and must doubt as to many things; but there are principles lying at the root of human life which are invincible to all doubt. We can demonstrate many things; but there are natural realities beyond our power of demonstration. On the side of sense, all things seem to fluctuate and waver in uncertainty; on the side of mere intellect we soon cross the limit of our powers. But Humanity is more than either sense or intellect. There is, as he believes, a primitive endowment of spiritual instinct in man, which looks forth upon

[1] Faugère, ii. pp. 91, 92, 99, 104.

a higher world of reality. Repeatedly, and in various applications, he recurs to these three radical sides or elements of Humanity; "the sensible—the intellectual, or the exercise of reason left to itself—and the spiritual or divine." Pascal despairs of a philosophy which is either a mere generalisation of sensible experience, or which aims at demonstrating everything from a purely rational point of view; but he is so far from resting in mere intellectual doubt, that he tries to find a ground for human certitude in a deeper stratum of Humanity than either sense or what he calls "reason." Neander and others have vindicated for him a supreme position as a philosopher on this very account. With them he is not only no sceptic, but he stands forth among the men who have specially vindicated the claims of Humanity as endowed with the divine attributes of "spirit" and "will"—the men of "full mental healthiness" who have recognised in man a free spiritual life no less than a life of sense and intellect. This may or may not be. But the mere fact that Pascal has aimed at a deeper ground of certitude, whether he has made it clear or not, and whether or not he has spoken with undue depreciation of other sources of knowledge, should be enough to vindicate him from the charge of even philosophical scepticism. In the following passage he has explained his views more fully. More than any other, perhaps, it may be taken as the text of his philosophy.

"We discover truth," he says, "not only by reasoning, but by feeling (*le cœur*); and it is in this latter manner that we discover first principles—and in vain does reasoning, which has no share in their production, try to combat these principles. The Pyrrhonists, who attempt this, labour in vain.

We know that we are not deceived, however incapable we may be of proving so by any power of reasoning. This incapacity only demonstrates the weakness of our reasoning faculty, and not the incertitude of all our knowledge, as they pretend. Nay, our knowledge of first principles, such as the ideas of *space, time, motion, number*, is as certain as any obtained by reasoning. It is, in fact, upon such conclusions of feeling and instinct that Reason must ultimately rest and base all its arguments. We *feel* that there are three dimensions in space, and that numbers are infinite; and reason hence demonstrates that there are no two square numbers the one of which is double the other. Principles are felt, propositions deduced, and both with certitude, although in different ways. And it is as absurd for the 'reason' to demand of the 'heart' proofs of its first principles before asserting them, as it would be for the 'heart' to demand of the 'reason' a *feeling* of all propositions that she demonstrates before accepting them. This weakness, therefore, should only serve to humble reason in its desire to make itself judge of everything, but by no means to moderate the certitude of our conviction, as if reason were alone capable of instructing us."[1]

There may be something to object to in Pascal's mode of expression in the above passage. Cousin has made the most of his confusion of "reason" and "reasoning" —"la raison" and "le raisonnement." The expression "le cœur," by which he designates the higher faculty of intuition, may be inadequate and misleading—complex and disturbing in its association. But withal, his attitude in favour of a ground of certainty in human knowledge is unmistakable. So far he is not only not with Montaigne, but he is clearly against him. The rights of nature, as he says, rise up against the Pyrrhonist. They make themselves good. And however strongly Pascal may

[1] Faugère, ii. p. 108.

draw the picture of human weakness, and all the contrarieties which our nature encloses, he does not mean by this to strike at the roots of all knowledge, and leave man a prey to helpless doubt. He means merely to shake the throne of rational security, and to show that no conclusions of mere philosophy can reach all the exigencies of man's condition. His analysis of human nature is the analysis of a moralist, and not of a psychologist or rational philosopher. He looks at man always as a spiritual being. It is his spiritual capacity which alone makes him great, and yet intensifies all the lower contradictions of his nature. It is "thought alone which makes man's greatness." A man can be conceived "without hands or feet or head, but not without thought."

"The possession of the earth would not add to my greatness. As to space, the universe encloses and absorbs me as a mere point, but by thought I embrace it. . . . Man is but a reed, the feeblest of created things — but one possessing thought (*un roseau pensant*). It needs not that the universe should arm itself to crush him. A breath, a drop of water, suffices for his destruction. But were the whole universe to rise against him, man is yet greater than the universe, since man *knows* that he dies. He knows the universe prevails against him. The universe knows nothing of its power."[1]

It is hardly possible to speak more eloquently of the dignity of human nature. And if it is the same voice which speaks in such pathetic or it may be harsh tones of human weakness and misery, and the disproportions of our natural life, it is the very consciousness of greatness that inspires the consciousness of misery. Looking from such a height of human dignity, he sees all the depths of

[1] Faugère, ii. p. 84.

human baseness. It is this higher spirit which consecrates Pascal as a moralist. Has he rebuked the presumptions of humanity? has he called upon proud reason to humble itself? has he gibed human philosophy, and even gloried for a moment in the contradictions of empiricism? It is never that he may laugh at man, or that he may rest in the mere contemplation of his follies or extravagances, but because he himself profoundly realised the height and the depth of his being—the grandeur to which he could rise, or to which God could raise him, and the baseness and miseries to which he could sink. Doubtless, as with all concentrated and meditative natures, Pascal delights to dwell on the weaker and gloomier side of humanity. This was partly the result of his Jansenist leanings, but mainly it came from his own intense reality of feeling. It was bred of his austere sadness of heart, and is found to run as a note of profound constitutional melancholy through all his letters, and all his life, as well as his Thoughts. In the view of eternity, and of the awful issues involved in religion, the common life and pursuits of man seemed to him not only frivolous, but criminal. He looked forth, therefore, on this common life with eyes not only of tears, but of displeasure. He seemed even at times to derive something of stern satisfaction from its very follies and absurdities. But this is only the temporary mood of the profound moralist touched to his heart by pangs that he cannot resist. His true view of life is never cynical,—but always grave, if bitter—and hopeful, if stern.

Pascal's supposed philosophical scepticism admits of something of the same explanation. He has not only no wish to disturb the fundamental verities of human

thought, but he endeavours to fix them in an ineradicable instinct or universal "sense," against which all the assaults of Pyrrhonism must break. But the while he is himself deeply moved by the perplexities of human reason. Although no Pyrrhonist in thought, he knows too well in experience the depths of Pyrrhonism. His mind is one of those to be met with in all ages, which, while it clings to faith, and is even strong in the assertion of faith's claims, is yet in certain moments utterly distracted by doubt. Constantly searching the foundations of human knowledge,—sifting them as with lighted glance,—they seemed at times to crumble away before him. Nothing remained fixed to his piercing look. As few minds have experienced, he felt the awful darkness which encloses all mortal aspiration, and the keenest audacities of human speculation. The incapacities of human reason at such times overwhelmed him, and left him hopeless, or, still worse, in a half-derisive mood. And these moods, as well as his clearer and more elaborate thoughts, hastily transferred to paper, are found amongst his notes. It is quite impossible to vindicate his consistency, and it is not in the least necessary to do this, as already explained; while we feel bound to maintain that his higher mood is his true mood, and that the Pascal of the 'Pensées'—the veritable Pascal—is to be judged, not by his weakness but by his strength; by his moments of clear mental sanity and insight, and not by his moments of despair or of derisive mockery of all human philosophy.

This seems to us the true light in which to regard the famous wager-essay on the existence of God, which has been a scandal even to some of his greatest admirers. It

is impossible to defend this essay on any principle of sound philosophy. Either there is a God or there is not. Which side of the question shall we take? "Reason," he says, "cannot decide." The fact, he means, cannot be demonstrated according to his customary use of the word reason. But if it cannot, there must yet be a balance of reason, and proof on one side or the other. And the only fair and manly issue of such a question must be, On which side lies this balance? A valid theistic conclusion can be found in no other way, and least of all in any calculation of chances, or balance of self-interest. And yet it is this last which Pascal has put forward with such prominence in this famous essay. "Wager," he says. "If you win, you win everything; if you lose, you lose nothing. Wager, then, without hesitation, that God exists. . . . On one side is an eternity of life, of infinite blessedness to be gained, and what you stake is finite. . . . Our proposition is, that the finite is to be vested in a wager, in which there is an equal chance of gain and loss, and *infinitude to gain.*" The play was hardly worthy of Pascal, and the 'mystery of the game' could certainly never be unravelled in any such way. But not a few minds like Pascal's—with deep spiritual intuitions and yet a craving for scientific certainty constantly mocking these intuitions—have felt in a similar manner the hazard of the great question, and may have said to themselves, "We must take our stand, and this is the side which weighs in the balance. We can lose nothing; we may gain everything." The mood is not a lofty one, and it is no higher in Pascal than in any one else; but there are moments of terrible doubt, when the soul is so borne away on the surge of the sceptical

wave that rises from the depth of all human speculation, that it can only cling to the Divine by an effort of will, and with something of the gamester's thought that this is the winning side! The thought may be shallow and poor in itself, but in such cases it comes not out of the shallows but out of the depths of a mind torn by distracting doubts in the face of the dreadful problems of life.

Out of the same depth of spiritual experience and trenchant moral analysis comes all that is true and valuable in his so-called 'Apology.' That the 'Pensées' were more or less designed to form such an Apology—to be woven into the plan of a treatise in defence of the Christian religion—seems beyond doubt. He had himself, according to the statement of his nephew, unfolded such a plan to his friends, in a lengthened conversation about the year 1657 or 1659. They were charmed with the loftiness of his design, and listened to his exposition of it for two or three hours with unabated interest. He was to commence with an analysis of human nature, and to advance from the contemplation of its mysteries, obscurities, and perplexities, to the consideration of the various methods, philosophical and religious, by which reason had endeavoured to meet the difficulties of thought and life. After explaining the inconclusiveness and absurdities of these methods—represented by the diverse philosophies and religions of the world—he was to call attention to the Jewish religion, and the superiority which it presents to all others, both in the extraordinary circumstances of its history, and in the revelation which it gives of one God, Creator and Governor of the world, and of the origin of man—his primitive innocence and fall. The idea of the fall, which was a central one in all

Pascal's thoughts, was to be fully expounded, in its own character and as "the source not only of whatever is most inexplicable in man's nature, but also of a multitude of things, external to him, of which he knows not the causes." From the fall he was to pass to the hopes of deliverance revealed in the Old Testament, and especially the lofty conception which it gives of God as a God of love, a feature peculiar to it, and "which he deemed the essence of true religion."

From such general considerations—of the nature of prolegomena or "preparation" for the reader's mind—he proceeded to furnish a brief view of "the positive proofs of the truths he wanted to establish,—proofs derived from the authenticity of the books of Moses, especially the miracles they record, the figures and types they embody." He then went on more at length to prove the truth of religion from prophecy, which he is represented as having studied deeply, and certain views of which, "of a nature wholly original," he explained with great clearness. Finally, "after going through the books of the Old Testament," he advanced to those of the New, "and deduced from them his crowning proofs of the truths of the Gospel." He began with Christ, whose divine mission he already supposed to be established by the argument from prophecy, and added additional force of evidence from His resurrection, His miracles, His doctrines, and the tenor of His life; then from the character and mission of the apostles; and lastly, from the style and manner of the New Testament books, and especially of the Gospels, "the multitude of miracles, martyrs, and the saints,"—in a word, from all "by which the Christian religion is so triumphantly established."

It is needless to say how imperfectly this design was ever accomplished; and no ingenuity of restoration can make of Pascal's apologetic plan anything but a mass of imperfect fragments. Yet he has left us a definite series of Thoughts on the Jewish religion, on Miracles, Figures, and Prophecy, and also on Jesus Christ and the general character of the Christian religion. In these Thoughts, it must be admitted, there is but little to reward our study in comparison with those of a more introductory and philosophical nature. Pascal's genius was in no degree historical, and but slightly critical—not to mention that the very idea of historical criticism had not emerged in his time, nor long afterwards. While realising so profoundly the perplexities of human experience, he has no conception of the difficulties that beset historical tradition; nor do his habits of scientific investigation, and the natural severity and logical rigour of his mind, seem to have suggested to him any misgivings as to the prevalence of miraculous agency in the world. The perfect faith with which he accepted the "miracle" of the Holy Thorn is a sufficient indication of his state of mind in this respect, and how ready he was to accept evidence the very idea of which merely excites a smile of wonder in the modern mind.

It cannot be said, therefore, to be any matter of regret that Pascal did not live to complete the historical portion of his projected work,—what he seems himself, from the report of his friends, to have considered the main structure of the defence he intended to rear on behalf of the religion so dear to him. He expended his real strength on the portico to the designed temple. His genius fitted

him to deal with this, and with this alone, in any adequate manner. His moral analysis, at once keen and veracious, enabled him not only to lay bare all the "disproportions" of humanity, but, moreover, to unfold the adaptation of Christianity as a spiritual system to meet and remedy these disproportions. This is the real "apologetic" work of the 'Pensées,' and the only one for which Pascal's mind pre-eminently fitted him. He sees in the Gospel a Divine Power which is capable of ministering to man's higher wants—a power of infinite compassion towards human weakness and misery, of infinite help for the one and remedy for the other. The Christian religion, according to him, alone "understands at once man's greatness and degradation, and the reason of both the one and the other." "It is equally important for man to know his capacity of being like God and his unworthiness of Him. To know of God without knowing his misery, or to know his misery without knowing the Redeemer, who alone can deliver him from it, is alike dangerous. The one knowledge constitutes the pride of the philosopher, the other the despair of the atheist. Man must therefore have the double experience, and so it has pleased God to reveal it. This the Christian religion does; in this it consists." Again: "Christ is the centre in which alone we find at once God and our misery. In Him alone we have a God whom we must approach without pride, and before whom we may yet bow without despair." In another and more lengthened passage he brings the two ideas of human corruption and divine redemption closely together, the one as supplementary of the other, and expressly

emphasises the perfection with which Christianity fits so to speak, into all the wards of the human enigma,—in comparison with every system of human philosophy.

"Without divine knowledge," he says, "what have men been able to do save to exalt themselves in the consciousness of their original greatness, or abase themselves in the view of their present weakness? Unable to see the whole truth, they have never attained to perfect virtue. One class considering nature as incorrupt, another as irreparable, they have been alternately the victims of pride or sensuality—the two sources of all vice. . . . If, in one case, they recognised man's excellence, they ignored his corruption; and so, in escaping indulgence, they lost themselves in pride. In the other case, in acknowledging his weakness they ignored his dignity, and, while escaping vanity, plunged into despair. Hence the diverse sects of Stoics and Epicureans, of Dogmatists and Academicians, &c. The Christian religion alone can reconcile these discrepancies and cure both evils, not by expelling the one by the other, according to the wisdom of this world, but by expelling both the one and the other by the simplicity of the Gospel. For it teaches the just that while it elevates them even to be partakers of the divine nature, they still carry with them in this lofty state the source of all their corruption, making them during life subjects of error, misery, death, and sin. At the same time, it proclaims to the most impious that they are capable of becoming partakers of a Redeemer's grace. By thus warning those whom it justifies, and consoling those whom it condemns, it tempers with just measure fear and hope, through the twofold capacity in all of grace and sin; so that it abases infinitely more than reason, yet without producing despair, and exalts infinitely more than natural pride, yet without puffing up,—plainly showing that it alone is exempt from all error and wrong, and possesses the power at once of instructing and correcting men. Who, then, can withhold his belief in this revelation, or refuse to adore its celestial light? For is

it not more clear than day that we feel in ourselves the ineffaceable traces of divine excellence? And it is equally clear that we experience every hour the effects of our fall and ruin. What, then, comes to us from all this chaos and wild confusion, in a voice of irresistible conviction, but the irrefragable truth of both those sides of humanity?"[1]

This passage conveys very clearly at once the gist of Pascal's philosophy and the chief merit of his line of Christian apology. The two cannot be separated. They run constantly into one another. He was a Christian apologist in so far as he was a Christian philosopher; and those who reject his line of Christian defence, will also reject his whole mode of thought. To him the only solution of human perplexity in thought and life is Christ. He is the "object and centre of all things, in whom alone all contradictions are reconciled." This is the conclusion of his intelligence, and not of his despair. Whatever may be the traces of scepticism in his intellectual nature, it is doing him great injustice to represent his acceptance of Christianity as a mere refuge from uncertainty. He is a totally different man from Huet, with whom Cousin has ventured to compare him in this respect. He never dallies on the surface; mere traditionalism has but a slight hold of him. He is a Christian not because he has been taught Christianity, or because the Church as a divine institution claims his allegiance. All these influences may have affected him, and given a turn to his mind; but they do not touch the essence of his thoughts. Anything he does say of the external claims of Christianity has but little weight. It is out of the depths of his own spiritual experience that his

[1] Faugère, ii. pp. 136, 137.

faith is born. It is a voice within him, a conflicting cry of weakness and aspiration going up everywhere from humanity, that find their answer in Christ. There is the enigma of man on the one side, to him otherwise hopeless, and Christ on the other, holding the keys of the enigma in His hand. The solution appeared to him perfect, according to his study and analysis of the problem—the twofoldness that he found in man, of divine dignity on the one hand, and frivolous, sensual degradation on the other. Both facts, he says, are equally clear and certain. Man's fall from a state of divine innocence alone explains them; and the Gospel alone recognises the one side as well as the other of human nature, and provides a Power capable of restoring its true balance and rectifying all its disorder. He felt in himself the might of this power healing all the wounds of his own heart, and binding up the shreds of his Christian efforts "to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with God." Whether we agree with all his analyses, or recognise all the adaptations which he describes, it is impossible not to feel that they were living to him, and that he saw in Christianity not merely a refuge for the disappointed heart, but a true philosophy of life—the only "sure and sound philosophy," as Justin Martyr had found long before him.

It is in the same spirit that he writes in many of his later 'Pensées.' Some of the passages already quoted are in fact taken from the chapter "On the Christian Religion," which appears to have been intended to form one of the concluding chapters of his Apology. But he repeats over and over again the same strain—that the present condition of man is only intelligible in the light

of the Christian revelation, and that this revelation alone answers to all man's necessities. Christ has not only proclaimed a higher truth to man, which man is bound to accept under penalties of default. This tone is also found sometimes, but comparatively seldom. The prevailing note is, that there is an admirable fitness between the two—the mysteries of human nature witnessing to the divine veracity of the Gospel, and the Gospel again holding the only key to these mysteries, and the only power of unravelling them and restoring them to their divine original. "Jesus Christ," he says, "is for all men; Moses for one people." "The knowledge of God without a knowledge of our misery produces pride; that of our misery without God leads to despair. The knowledge of Jesus is the means by which we at once find God and our misery." "Without Jesus Christ man is sunk in vice and misery. . . . In Him is all our virtue and felicity."

Of the more directly apologetic 'Pensées' of Pascal there are many of great significance and interest, slight as may be the value of his general historical argument, so far as this can be traced. Wherever he trusts to his own clear judgment and profound penetration, he throws out sentences weighty with meaning, and capable of being expanded into trains of argument. Our shortening space warns us that our quotations must come to an end; but the reader may thank us for drawing his attention to the following:—

"Even when Epictetus had discovered the right way, he could only say to man, 'You follow a wrong one.' He shows that there is another, but he does not lead to it. . . . Jesus Christ alone leads to it—*via, veritas.*

"Jesus Christ has spoken great things so simply that they seem to have cost Him little thought—and yet so fitly that we see well what His thought was." [This combination of clearness and *naïveté* is admirable.]

"The apostles were either deceived or deceivers; either supposition is full of difficulty.

"What right have they to say, 'It is impossible that we should rise again'? Which is the more difficult to be—to be born, or to be raised from the dead? Is it less difficult to come into being than to return to being? Custom (experience) renders the one easy to us; the want of custom makes the other seem impossible. But *this is a popular way of judging.*

"Who taught the evangelists the qualities of a truly heroic soul, that they should paint it to such perfection in Jesus Christ? Why have they made Him weak in His agony? Did they not know how to describe a death of fortitude? Assuredly; for it is the same St Luke paints St Stephen's death as so much braver than that of Jesus Christ. They have made Him capable of fear before the necessity of death had come, then entirely calm and brave. But when they show Him in trouble, the trouble comes from Himself; in the face of men He remains unmoved.

"The highest achievement of reason is to recognise that there is an infinity of things which surpass its powers.

"If we submit everything to reason, our religion would have nothing mysterious or supernatural. If we violate the principles of reason, our religion will be absurd and ridiculous.

"There are two extremes—to exclude reason, and to admit only reason.

"It is your own consent, and the steady voice of your own reason, and not that of others, which must make you believe.

"If antiquity was the rule of faith, the ancients were without a rule.

"Let them say what they will, it must be confessed that the Christian religion is something astonishing. 'That is because you were born in it,' they say. So far from this, I

am on my guard against it on this very account, lest this incline me unduly to it. But though I was born in it, the facts are not the less as I find them."

True to his whole conception of religion as the free choice of the heart and will, Pascal does not find any special difficulty in the fact of so many rejecting Christianity. It is of its very nature that it cannot be forced on any mind. The God of the Gospel can only be reached by faith. To all without faith, or the inner eye to see Him, He is a *Deus absconditus*, "a God who hides himself." In one of his letters to Mademoiselle de Roannez, he dwells upon this idea, which also continually recurs in his Thoughts:—

"If God continually revealed Himself to man, faith would have no value; we could not help believing. If He did not reveal Himself, there could be no such thing as faith. While hiding Himself, He yet reveals Himself to those who are willing to be His servants. . . . All things hide a mystery. All are a veil which conceal God. The Christian must recognise Him in all. . . . There is light enough for those who wish to see, but darkness enough for those who are of an opposite disposition. . . . For God would rather move the will than the intellect. Perfect clearness would cure the one, but injure the other.'

And so this great mind comes round once more to its central thought, that religion is born not of science, but of love and faith. Christianity appeared to Pascal divine—as the only true interpreter of human experience; and where this experience bore no witness to it, and found no blessing in it, the fault and the misery were its own. The divine light was not gone because men did not see it, when they were not willing to see it.

This may seem a hard saying,—a paradox of faith rejoicing in its own illumination, rather than an utterance of reason challenging the world. But can a divine appeal ever go further? Christian apology has its own sphere, no less than science; and the evidence which the one desiderates is not the supreme life and power of the other. It may not on this account be the less satisfactory or the less rational when the whole life of humanity is looked at.

If we ask ourselves, in conclusion, what is the chief charm of the 'Pensées,' we feel inclined to answer,—their touching reality. They are the utterances of one who thought not only deeply but passionately. A strange thrill of personal emotion runs through them all, animating them with vitality, even when one-sided or extravagant. One of his own countrymen[1] has said of Pascal that it was his mission to do for theology what Socrates did for philosophy—to bring it down from heaven to earth. And certainly there is the breathing movement as of a human heart through his whole writings. More than anything else, it is this vitality combined with his exquisite literary art which sets him above all his friends and contemporaries—Arnauld, De Saci, Le Maitre, Nicole, or Fontaine. Still, when we read the 'Provincial Letters' or the 'Pensées,' we feel ourselves in communion with a living writer who knew how to light up with an immortal touch both the follies of ecclesiasticism and the struggles of a solitary spirit after truth. The tenderness of a genuine insight mingles with all the sublimity

[1] The lamented Prévost Paradol, Études sur les Moralistes Français.

and severe reserve of the thought, and so we get close to a true soul, distant as Pascal himself in some respects remains to us. The play of human feeling which we miss in the man moves in his writings, and touches our hearts with an ineffable sympathy, even when we remain unconvinced or unenlightened.

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